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Shani Roper

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**'A Almshouse Ting Dat': Development in Poor relief and Child Welfare in Jamaica
during the Interwar Years**

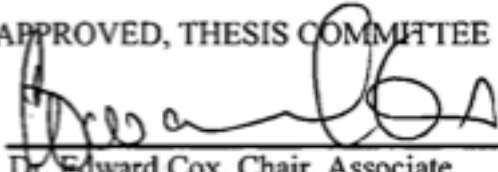
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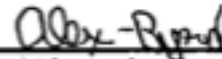
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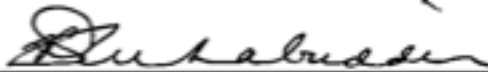
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ABSTRACT

*'A Almshouse Ting Dat': Developments in Poor Relief and Child Welfare
in Jamaica in the Interwar Years*

BY

Shani Roper

This dissertation examines the development of poor relief and child welfare policy in Jamaica during the interwar years. It establishes the paradigms for accessing relief and how this influenced broader discussions of poverty, class and citizenship in society. As such, it shows how these concerns about poverty in the public sphere influenced state policy as it related to tackling juvenile delinquency and destitution in society.

Currently, the historiography of the 1930s emphasizes the role of labor unrest as a propelling force to political change in the Caribbean. My thesis, while accepting this premise, uses the poor relief administration to elaborate upon the response of colonial administrators to pauperism in Jamaica. Financial difficulties restricted the amount of assistance provided to the aged and infirm, single mothers, orphans and juvenile delinquents. Inevitably, access to assistance became tinged with tensions of race, class and gender in the island. I conclude, therefore, that colonial administrators used the poor relief administration to intervene in the dialectic of poverty, class, citizenship and gender especially in the rehabilitation of destitute, displaced and delinquent children.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of family, friends, and members of my dissertation committee as well as the administration of the History Department at Rice University. In January 2010, I received the Wagoner Travel Grant that allowed me to conduct 6 weeks of archival research in London that summer as well as 4 months of research in Jamaica. The History Department funded my emergency travel back to London in the summer of 2011 thereby allowing me to complete this dissertation over the next fifteen months. I would like to thank the Chair of my committee, Dr. Edward Cox, for accommodating my desire to return home and finish writing.

Also I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the staff of the Jamaica Archives who tirelessly accommodated my numerous requests to see documents between 2010 and 2012. To my family members and friends, too numerous to name, in Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados, the United States and the United Kingdom, who believed in my capacity to overcome and ignored my moodiness, thank you. This has been a true test of strength, a labor of love and a team effort.

Lastly I dedicate my dissertation to my grandparents – Henry Roper (d. 1965), Stanford Tulloch (1917 – 2009), Doris Tulloch (1920 – 2011) and Listo Bell. ‘The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms...’ (Deut. 33: 27).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BS	—	Board of Supervision
BNA	—	British National Archives
CO	—	Colonial Office
CPH	—	Corporation Poor House
DMO	—	District Medical Officer
DWOWI	—	Development and Welfare Organization in the West Indies
JA	—	Jamaica Archives
KSAC	—	Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation
IP	—	Inspector of Poor
SMPH	—	St. Mary Poor House
WIRC	—	West India Royal Commission

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Chapter One

Positioning Social Welfare and Poor Relief in the Historiography of the Interwar Years

Introduction

There exists in the developed world an extensive body of literature detailing the evolution of poor relief and social welfare from as early as the seventeenth century to present times.¹ In the Anglo-Caribbean, however, the historiography of poor relief and social welfare emerges after the Second World War and reinforced notions of the dependence of colonial peoples on the metropole for moral and economic development. Metropolitan societies, therefore, stood as models of economic prosperity and development and as such encouraged former colonies, where possible, to replicate elements of education and health care policies. In fact, during the 1960s, supporters of modernization theory posited that ‘economic development was a progressive process propelling

¹ For examples of work on poor relief and policy in Europe and the United States, see Frances Fox-Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971); Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A history of Social Welfare in America* (New York: The Free Press, Sixth Edition 1999); George Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law 3 volumes* (A.M. Kelley, 1967); Sidney Web, *English Poor Law History 9 volumes* (Archon Books, 1967); Anthony Brundage, *English Poor Laws 1700 – 1930* (Palgrave Press, 2002); Larry Frohman, *Poor Relief and Welfare in Germany from the Reformation to World War I* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

the former colonial territories towards modernity, self-sufficiency, and widespread prosperity.’²

In contrast, since the 1980s, scholars of social policy and development in Latin America have argued that social policy, as an element of development, replicated and reinforced earlier practices of ‘exploitation and subjugation’ of colonial peoples.³ Similarly, scholars such as Walter Rodney, Franz Fanon, Eric Williams and Norman Manley resoundingly agreed that historic socio-economic ties with the metropole continued to marginalize former colonies in the contemporary period.⁴ This extensive discourse, however, fails to provide clear understanding of Anglo - Caribbean colonial policy as it relates to poor relief and social policy prior to Second World War.

This work, therefore, intervenes within the broader discourse of social and political change by detailing the social service infrastructure that existed in Jamaica prior to the arrival of the West India Royal Commission (WIRC) in 1938. Much of the historical literature on the interwar years refers to the labor unrest of the 1930s and WIRC as the underlying force for social and political change in the

² John Midgley, ‘Imperialism, Colonialism and Social Welfare’ in John Midgley and David Piachaud (eds.) *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and British Imperial Legacy* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. 2011) 36 – 52, 40.

³ Midgley, ‘Imperialism, Colonialism and Social Welfare,’ 40.

⁴ See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972); Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, Reprint 2005); Kwame Nrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (Heinemann, 1970). Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1995) posits that current world economic systems are founded on historical economic relationships in which former colonies such as the Caribbean and Africa, which are producers of raw materials exist on the periphery of central economies (i.e. former metropolitan communities).

twentieth century. The literature, however, fails to document and assess the (in)effectiveness of social policy of colonial states in the region prior to 1938. In fact, contemporaneous sources as well as the historiography suggest that colonial administrations failed to acknowledge the chronic hardship being experienced by the laboring population. This failure, therefore, resulted in pervasive unemployment and underemployment, extensive dilapidated housing in urban areas and a generally unhealthy, unskilled and landless population.

Understanding poor relief in the early twentieth century, therefore, requires an assessment of not just poor relief but rather the ways in which the discourse of poverty, class and citizenship in the late nineteenth century influenced policy decisions in the early twentieth century. The Law for the Relief of the Poor (1886), for example, was founded upon the same principles of the British Poor Law of 1834 – deterrence and elimination. Administrators used a variety of tests and procedures to limit the number of persons accessing relief. As a result, those receiving relief were among the poorest Jamaicans in the island. These policy practices continued in the twentieth century but were affected by local socio-economic conditions. As such, practices of deterrence and elimination evolved to match socio-economic circumstances. Furthermore, an evaluation of the interaction between the representatives of the state and relief recipients facilitates an assessment of how discourse on poverty, class and citizenship changed over time. This change over time is exceptionally clear when examining

government policy as it relates to industrial schools and the alleviation of juvenile delinquency in Jamaican society. Establishing a historiography of poor relief, therefore, provides a useful foundation from which historians can evaluate changes in social and political policy in Jamaica after 1938.

Jamaica in 1938

Sporadic social upheavals in the Anglo Caribbean during the 1930s forced the Colonial Office to convene the West India Royal Commission (WIRC).⁵ The Colonial Office charged the commissioners to investigate the underlying social, economic and political causes of the labor unrest in the British Caribbean. Over the course of fifteen months, committee members listened to the testimonies of 370 witnesses including large delegations, read over 700 memoranda of evidence as well as over 300 communications of grievances.⁶ They also visited houses, hospitals, schools, factories, asylums, leper homes and land settlements in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago and the Windward Islands.

Prior to 1938, publications such as W.L. Macmillan's *Warning from the West Indies* revealed significant underdevelopment and poverty in the English -

⁵ The WIRC is also referred to as the Moyne Commission.

⁶ Great Britain. *West India Royal Commission Report* (London: HMO, 1945) xvii.

speaking Caribbean and Africa.⁷ Inadequate provisions in potable water, housing, sanitation and under-production in agriculture were cited as the main causes for malnutrition and the spread of diseases in these territories.⁸ In most Anglo-Caribbean territories, the bulk of the most fertile land, even in territories with an extensive peasantry system, was concentrated in the hands of a few people.⁹ As a result, a large landless proletariat, especially in islands such as Barbados, Antigua and St. Kitts, were wholly dependent on the sugar industry for employment.¹⁰ In other islands, inadequate land allocations of five acres or less forced peasant farmers to eke out a living by selling the surplus after personal consumption on the local market or where possible, for export. In Barbados, though five acres was officially held as the minimum needed for a decent subsistence, 77% of smallholders (18,000 out of 176,000) owned less than one acre.¹¹

The mono-crop orientation of many of the colonies required many persons to import basic food provisions to supplement inadequate local production. Trinidad, for example, imported approximately 80% of its food. In Barbados, the high cost of imports meant that the tax on salt fish and flour was significantly higher than in the peasant-based economy of Grenada.¹² Heavy taxation on basic

⁷ William Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies: A Tract for Africa and the Empire* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1936. Reprinted 1971).

⁸ Allister Hinds, *Britain's Sterling Colonial Policy 1939 – 1958* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 22.

⁹ William Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies*, 78.

¹⁰ Macmillan, 84.

¹¹ Macmillan, 91.

¹² Macmillan, 106.

food necessities further entrenched laborers in a cycle of economic exploitation and poverty. Several nutrition commissions throughout the Caribbean attested to the fact that ‘West Indians suffice on chronically insufficient diets’ and ‘that the diet of laboring population must be classed as bad.’¹³ The Commission in Trinidad reported that due to malnutrition most laborers on that island were unable to perform basic labor of 20 hours a week.¹⁴ In Jamaica, any laborer who owned land balanced his/her farming schedule with general employment and worked on average, three days of the week. Seasonal unemployment often required women and children to work so as to supplement the family’s income.¹⁵ This situation was extremely prevalent within urban areas where high levels of underemployment and unemployment translated into inadequate housing, malnutrition and exposure to diseases.

Commissions, during in the 1920s and 30s, repeatedly, but to no avail, called the Crown’s attention to the plight of West Indians.¹⁶ In 1938, however, trade unionists, philanthropists, missionaries, politicians and local citizens provided the WIRC with evidence of the extreme poverty under which the average laborer subsisted. Drawing upon older reports, witness interviews and

¹³ T.S. Simey, *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946) 13 – 14.

¹⁴ Simey, *Welfare and Planning*, 13.

¹⁵ Macmillan, *Warning from West Indies*, 108.

¹⁶ Richard Hart, ‘Origin and Development of the working class in the English-Speaking Caribbean area: 1897 – 1937, in Malcom Cross and Gad Heuman (eds.) *Labour in the Caribbean* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992). See also O. Nigel Bolland, *On the March: labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934 – 39* (Kingston, Jamaica: 1995). Both of these authors make reference to the commissions that visited the region to assess social and economic conditions in the region.

government documents, commissioners identified declining opportunities for overseas employment, high levels of unemployment, low wages and high inflation as the major causes of discontent.¹⁷ They argued that the ‘crux of the West Indian problem is that a demand for better living conditions is becoming increasingly insistent...at a time when world economic trends seriously endanger even the maintenance of present standards.’¹⁸ Furthermore, the commissioners concluded that the situation was exacerbated by the lack of a well-defined and adequate social welfare and public health program. This work, therefore, elucidates the nature of social welfare services in Jamaica prior to the arrival of the WIRC in 1938.

Throughout the region, most of the laboring population (most of whom were black) lived in pitiable conditions. The commissioners noted that

‘The poorer quarters of towns such as Kingston (Jamaica), Georgetown (British Guiana), Bridgetown (Barbados) and Port-of-Spain (Trinidad) all show the obvious consequences of hunger, disease, ignorance and crime, and of shiftless improvidence.’¹⁹

If taken at face value, this assessment of social conditions in urban centers across the region reflected contemporary notions of poverty in the British Caribbean. Among civil society, the connection between ‘ignorance, ‘shiftless improvidence’ and ‘crime’ lay in the belief that poverty occurred as a result of poor work ethic

¹⁷ Great Britain, *West India Royal Commission Report* (London: H.M. Stationary Office 1945; Republished by Ian Randle Publishers, with introduction by Denis Benn, 2011), 423.

¹⁸ *Report*, 423.

¹⁹ *Report*, 34.

and moral values. Subsequently, this lack of ethics and values condemned both parents and children to a life of crime. Members of the commission, however, argued that the root of unrest and high levels of crime in the region was due to social and economic disenfranchisement. In their recommendations, therefore, they placed a heavy focus on the ‘re-molding’ of the West Indian governments to provide ‘considerable extensions in public social services to colonial citizens.’²⁰ These efforts would be channeled through the creation of an organization to fund the expansion of social services as well as enhancing infrastructural and economic development throughout the region. Contributors to newspapers throughout the region hailed the passage of the White Paper on Colonial Policy as the ‘opening of a new era in the evolution of the colonies toward nationhood.’²¹ The British Guianan newspaper, *Argosy*, commented that they ‘never expected anything like the widespread sweeping plans proposed.’²²

The WIRC signaled a turning point in the history of the British Caribbean. Prior to this period, many Caribbean colonial authorities refrained from introducing statutory social services because the British policy of self-sufficiency required colonies to fund ‘domestic programs’ out of pocket.²³ Jamaica and Barbados stand out in comparison to other Caribbean and colonial administrations

²⁰ T. S. Simey, *Welfare and Planning*, 26.

²¹ ‘New Era in the W.I. Colonies: British Guiana’s Comments on the Commission’s Report’ *The Barbados Advocate* February 23, 1940, p.1.

²² ‘New Era in the W.I. Colonies.’

²³ James Midgley, ‘Colonialism and Welfare’ *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 9:2 (31 – 50) 39.

in that elements of British Elizabethan Poor Laws were in operation from the early seventeenth century.²⁴ These early laws, however, applied only to European residents, widows and orphans as the care of enslaved persons rested with the slave owners and attorneys. Between 1838 and 1865,²⁵ emerging social issues with urbanization, such as crime, juvenile delinquency and homelessness, forced colonial authorities to reevaluate existing laws to deal with these perceived nuisances. Increased provision of social services, therefore, began in the late nineteenth century and gathered momentum after the Moyne Commission (1938) with the creation, in the 1940s, of the Development and Welfare Organization in the West Indies.²⁶

Historiography

Literature on Social Welfare After World War II

Discourse on the development of social welfare in the Caribbean begins in the 1940s after the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. Many of the contributors to this body of literature were expatriates from Britain working in the colonies or persons attached to advisory bodies of the Colonial Office. The

²⁴ Other territories, such as British Guyana, may have included such legislation after 1838. There is, however, a greater body of literature available for Jamaica and Barbados in comparison to other territories.

²⁵ The dates 1838 and 1865 are very important in Jamaican historiography. In August 1838, the British government emancipated all enslaved Africans in its territories. The viscous suppression of the Morant Bay Rebellion in October 1865 led to the dissolution of the Jamaican Assembly.

²⁶ Midgley, 'Colonialism and Welfare,' 40.

main purpose of this early literature was to delimit the extent of social service development in the colonies. Many of these authors, such as L.P. Mair, suggested that the expansion of education, health and labor legislation in the colonies was a direct result of British Colonial Policy after 1940.²⁷ In his preface, T.S. Simey, former Social Welfare Advisor to the Comptroller of Development and Welfare in the West Indies, argued that

‘The most important problem which now confronts Great Britain in the Colonial empire is that of promoting a transition from the authoritarian or ‘Crown Colony’ type of government, which has proved successful in many ways from the administration of territories occupied by people’s of a ‘primitive’ stage of development, to form a government suitable for those who have advanced up to or within a measurable distance of social and political self reliance.’²⁸

Simey, therefore, proposed several schemes for improving social work and welfare as a whole in the region, which would facilitate this transition from dependency to self-reliance.²⁹

Many of the suggestions for social welfare reform were applied universally among the colonies. Proposals focused heavily on the creation of social welfare advisory boards, and the promotion of community development especially in the areas of education and health in both Africa and the English speaking-Caribbean. Social scientists based their research on the numerous

²⁷ L.P. Mair, *Welfare in the British Colonies* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1944).

²⁸ Simey, *Welfare and Planning*, v.

²⁹ Simey, 193.

reports of local advisory committees and the colonial office. Much of this research, however, reinforced the notion of the ‘primitiveness’ of colonial peoples and the role of the metropole in socializing them. The use of the term primitive, in this case, referred to the overall lack of development in the areas of educational, health and general infrastructure in former slave societies.

Numerous works done by anthropologists and social scientists in the Caribbean identified several social phenomenon particular to the Caribbean. Since the nineteenth century, colonial administrators identified single parent homes and high levels of illegitimacy as a key characteristic of family life among the laboring population. More importantly, they identified the instability of Afro-Caribbean family as the main cause of primitive behavior, poverty and immorality in the region. This discourse continued into the twentieth century, especially among the elite and colonial administrators, and formed a key part of correspondence on policy for destitute, displaced and delinquent children.

By the mid twentieth century, however, the creation of the University College of the West Indies produced Caribbean scholars trained in the Caribbean, who understood Caribbean society. Similarly, Caribbean born academics, trained in the metropole, expanded their research to examine population movement, changes in island economies, as well as the impact of internal market routes on overall economic development. Much of this research was published in *Social and Economic Studies*, the academic journal of the Institute of Social and Economic

Research.³⁰ Studies by persons such as, Edith Clarke attempted to challenge many of the stereotypes about the behavior patterns of the laboring population in the region. During the 1940s, 50s and 60s, regional conferences on social work with an emphasis on improving public health and child health influenced much of the literature on development. Many of these scholarly articles focused heavily on contemporary socio-economic issues such as the path to economic development. Issues of community development, social work, and childcare were the main areas of social work that received some mention in the literature.

Positioning Poor Relief in Current Historiography of the Interwar Years

The historiography of the early twentieth century focuses on broader discussions of social, economic and political change in Caribbean societies. Topics such as trade unionism and the rise of the labor movement, women's work and life, and education dominate the historical literature of the interwar years. With the exception of research on women's voluntary associations, few histories include information on poor relief and the quality of social services afforded to the Jamaican poor up to the 1938.³¹ As a result, there exists, in the historiography,

³⁰ Later renamed the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Research.

³¹ Linnette Vassell, 'Voluntary Women's Association's in Jamaica: The Jamaica Federation of Women 1944 - 1962' (PhD History Dissertation, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica 1993); Also compiled by Linnette Vassell, 'Voices of Women in Jamaica 1898 - 1939' (Mona, Jamaica: Department of History, University of the West Indies, 1993)); Erna Brodber 'Afro-Jamaican Women at the Turn of the Century' *Social and Economic Studies* 35 #2 (1986). Individual biographies of social work among women contribute to this broader discussion. See Delia Jarrett – Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson 1905 – 1965* (Kingston Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998).

significant gaps in the areas of social welfare and children in Jamaica and the Commonwealth Caribbean.³²

At present five major monographs examine the socio-cultural dynamics of Jamaican society between 1865 and 1938.³³ All these texts are founded on the premise that slave society established social, economic and ideological domination of the white oligarchy over the enslaved. This, Patrick Bryan in *The Jamaican People*, argues was the foundation of ‘Two Jamaicas’.³⁴ One of these Jamaicas existed where the white minority emulated European, more specifically, Victorian ideals and values, while Afro-Jamaicans created a hybrid culture that combined both European and African traditions and practices. This divide continued in the post-emancipation period, as the minority white hegemony maintained social, economic and political domination over the black majority

³² The term Commonwealth Caribbean refers to all territories formerly colonized by Britain who became members of the commonwealth after independence. This includes the mainland countries of Guyana and Belize (formerly British Honduras).

³³ Patrick Bryan, *Philanthropy and Social Welfare in Jamaica: An Historical Survey* (Mona, Jamaica: Sir Arthur Lewis Institution of Social and Economic Studies, First Published 1990. Second Edition 2002) and *The Jamaican People 1880 – 1902: Race, Class and Social Control* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, First Published 1991, Second Edition 2000); Brian Moore and Michele Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica 1865 – 1920* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2004); Erna Brodber, *The Second Generation of Freeman in Jamaica, 1907 – 1944* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004) and Henrice Altink, *Destined for a Life of Service: Defining Afro-Jamaican Womanhood 1865 – 1938* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011). Another major work is Thomas Holt’s *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labour and Politics in Jamaica and Britain 1832 – 1938*. This work, however, over emphasizes the period before 1865 and therefore does not provide an in depth analysis of social and political issues in the region after 1865.

³⁴ Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880 – 1902: Race, Class and Social Control* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, First Published 1991, Second Edition 2000) xi. This is also the title for Philip Curtin’s book *Two Jamaicas: The role of Ideas in a Tropical Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

laboring population. 'White interests' retained command of the economic and political order by controlling 'land resources.'³⁵ Control of land, therefore, allowed for the 'manipulation of the law, influence upon the political and constitutional order and the projection of...the indispensability of white leadership in the progress of the colony.'³⁶ Likewise, the majority of Afro-Jamaicans remained disenfranchised with limited access to education and land, thereby hampering the upward economic and political mobility of majority of the formerly enslaved population.³⁷ Afro-Jamaicans, however, retained many of their socio-cultural traditions, which at least on the surface, stood in stark contrast to the values of the elite and the black middle class.

After the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, the Jamaican Assembly was disbanded in favor of direct rule from the Colonial Office with the Governor as its representative. This decision removed the voter franchise. Several works and articles examine the impact of the introduction of Crown Colony Government on the political dynamics.³⁸ Author such as Vincent Marsala, argued that under this

³⁵ Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880 – 1902*, xi.

³⁶ Bryan, xi.

³⁷ Brian Moore and Michele Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica 1865 – 1920* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2004) 4. The high tax and literacy test requirements kept majority of the laboring population from the polls even after the introduction of a modified Crown Colony Government in 1884.

³⁸ Current major works on the Morant Bay Rebellion include Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics and Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792 – 1865* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood, 1981) and "The Killing Time": *The Morant Bay Rebellion, Jamaica* (University of Tennessee Press, 1995). For information on changes to the Jamaican Constitution see Vincent Marsala, *Sir John Peter Grant Governor of Jamaica, 1866 – 1874: An Administrative History*

new political system the Governor was able to institute significant changes in the areas of social services, arts and culture and the penal system. A key area of emphasis was the increased centralization in the administrative structure of government during this period. This is essential as the government took the opportunity to also centralize poor relief under a central body, thereby theoretically removing it from the control of parochial boards (local government). Further works on key middle class black social figures, the Chinese, Indian, Indentured African and Jewish communities detail the dynamic socio-cultural dynamics of Jamaican society after 1865.³⁹

A key area of concern among the elite (both black and white) was the seemingly nonchalant attitude of the laboring population towards issues of marriage, the nuclear family and illegitimacy. Brian Moore and Michele Johnson argue that with the high levels of illegitimacy in Jamaica and other Caribbean

(Kingston, Jamaica: Cultural Heritage Series, Volume 3, Institute of Jamaica 1972); Brian Moore and Swithin Wilmot (ed) *Before and After 1865: Education, Politics and Regionalism in the Caribbean* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998); Sires, Ronald. "The Experience of Jamaica with Modified Crown Colony Government." *Social and Economic Studies* 4 no. 2 [June 1955]: 150 – 167 and "The Jamaica Constitution of 1884." *Social and Economic Studies* 3 no. 1 [June 1954]: 64 – 81.

³⁹ See Monica Schuler, *'Alas Alas Kongo: A Social History of African Indentured Immigrants into Jamaica 1841 – 1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Verene Shepherd *Transients to Settlers: The Experience of Indians in Jamaica 1845 – 1950* (Great Britain: Centre for Research in Asian Migration, University of Warwick, 1993); Walter Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Labor: Chinese and Indian Immigrants to the British West Indies 1838 – 1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) Rosanne Adderley, *New Negroes from Africa: Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth Century Caribbean* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006).

territories, sex and marriage became the focus of the ‘civilizing mission of the elite.’⁴⁰ In their view,

‘The idea of legal Christian monogamous marriage was an integral part of an entire ideology of what constituted morality and civility and, inasmuch as it provided only the “appropriate” context within which sexual intercourse should occur, it was the basis for the legitimacy of sexual relationships and for the issue of those unions.’⁴¹

Legal marriage rates were low among the laboring population despite the popularity of long standing domestic unions also referred to as faithful concubinage.⁴² Caribbean anthropologists suggest that many of these stable domestic unions also broadened to include an extended kinship and community network within the concept of the family.⁴³ These stable domestic unions also coexisted with temporary or visiting relationships. Nonetheless, many members of the elite and black middle class and religious orders considered these relationships unstable and easily dissoluble. Furthermore, the absence of the legal standing of ‘marriage’ condemned the progeny of these unions as being illegitimate. These practices, when coupled with high levels of female run

⁴⁰ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, 96.

⁴¹ Moore and Johnson, 96 – 7.

⁴² Quite a few studies examine the development of Afro-Caribbean kinship and network ties including Catherine Barrow ed. *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996); Edith Clarke *My Mother Who Fathered me: A Study of Three Selected Communities of Jamaica* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad: University of the West Indies Press, Revised edition, 1999); Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953) 106; Raymond Smith, *Kinship and Class in the West Indies: A Genealogical study of Jamaica and Guyana* (London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4 and Judith Blake, *Family Structure in Jamaica: The Social Context of Reproduction* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe Inc. 1961).

⁴³ Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven*, 103.

households, illegitimacy, and desertion by fathers, reinforced perceptions of the immorality and backwardness of the formerly enslaved. In addition, historical and contemporary socio-economic conditions required laboring women to work both in the fields and in the home. Consequently, the main goal of members of civic and religious society was to inculcate among the laboring population a sense of 'respectability' through the promotion of the legal institution of marriage and appropriate gender relations.⁴⁴ Respectability, therefore, constituted acceptance of the nuclear family of which the male breadwinner was the head and women remained in the home.

The major tools of dissemination of Victorian ideals were philanthropy and social work, the latter being an element of social welfare. Social scientists have defined social welfare as an 'organized system of social services and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain standards of life and health...and to promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community.'⁴⁵ In the post emancipation period, no Caribbean society provided a comprehensive and organized system of social services, including access to medical assistance, to any colonial citizen. In fact, the number

⁴⁴ Moore and Johnson, 97.

⁴⁵ John Maxwell, 'Caribbean Social Work: Its historical Development and Current Challenges.' A paper presented at the Caribbean Regional Social Work Conference entitled "Caribbean Social Work: A Developmental Perspective (St. Michaels, Barbados June 6 – 10, 1993). Also published as John Maxwell 'The Evolution of Social Welfare Services and Social Work in the English Speaking Caribbean (with major reference to Jamaica)' in *Caribbean Journal of Social Work* 1 (March 2005).

of doctors in Jamaica steadily declined throughout the nineteenth century. Bryan notes that between 1833 and 1861 the number of doctors decreased from 200 to 50.⁴⁶ This number only marginally increased to 100 doctors in 1900.⁴⁷ By the early twentieth century, the quality of health care remained inadequate due to the lack of human and infrastructural resources in spite of increased government spending between 1870 and 1900.⁴⁸ Jamaicans also suffered from a series of malarial, respiratory, pulmonary and parasitic diseases as well as several other disorders.⁴⁹ This lack of medical infrastructure, combined with poor sanitation, dilapidated housing communities and inadequate diet, meant that the average laboring class Jamaican was an extremely unhealthy and diseased individual. Philanthropic organizations as well as charity work among members of society, like Mary Seacole, were instrumental in alleviating physical pain and sickness among members of the community.⁵⁰

Bryan's *Philanthropy and Social Welfare in Jamaica* locates the development of social work and philanthropy within this broader context of social malaise, economic downturn and political change between the seventeenth century and political independence in 1962. Charity and philanthropy played the essential role of supplementing poor relief and government sponsored social

⁴⁶ Bryan, *The Jamaican People*, 166.

⁴⁷ Bryan, 166.

⁴⁸ Bryan, 167.

⁴⁹ Bryan, 177.

⁵⁰ For more information on Mary Seacole see Aleric Josep's 'Mary Seacole: Her Life and Her Times' (MA Thesis, Dept. of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1986).

services. In most Caribbean territories, the church assisted in alleviating social hardship. Numerous works document the influence of the church (regardless of denomination) in the fields of education, health, and welfare in the Caribbean throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵¹ By the late nineteenth century, however, the administration of education and poor relief existed as a joint partnership between the state and the church. Patrick Bryan argued that church and state policy complimented each other especially in the realm of social welfare and poor relief.⁵² Members of both establishments subscribed to the Protestant ethic in the belief that pauperism existed as a result of immorality and laziness. Within this ideological framework, the role of poor relief, therefore, was to temporarily alleviate economic hardship to those deemed worthy of assistance. Those dispensing relief, however, determined worthiness of relief recipients.

Class and gender norms lay at the foundation of the discourse on worthiness. Terms such as respectability and citizenship pervade historical literature and primary sources. Historians identify such language as being the

⁵¹ For examples of literature on the role of the church see Devon Dick, *Rebellion to Riot: The Jamaican Church in Nation Building* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003); Shirley Gordon, *Our Cause for His Glory: Christianisation and Emancipation in Jamaica* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 1998); Carl C. Campbell, *The Young Colonials: A Social History of Education in Trinidad and Tobago* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 1996) Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.) *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to Present* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996); Shirley Gordon, *A Century of West Indian Education* (London: Longman Press, 1963).

⁵² Patrick Bryan, *Philanthropy and Social Welfare in Jamaica*, 25.

result of a greater attempt at ‘civilizing’ the Afro-Jamaican.⁵³ Lower – class Afro-Jamaican women inherently became the focus of this discourse due not only to Victorian ideals of femininity and motherhood but also middle class Afro-Jamaican interpretations of these ideals. At the core of Victorian ideals was the notion that women controlled the household and were instrumental in inculcating societal, class and gender norms among their children. In Britain, this discourse on motherhood was founded within a greater discourse of imperial expansion and nationhood. Healthy and well-socialized children were essential in maintaining the empire. In her work, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood,’ Anna Davin argued that the imperial mandate of nation building propelled larger discussions on eugenics, child welfare and public health. Poverty, poor parenting and an abandonment of proper mothering skills impeded the expansion of the British imperial mission especially in the face of the Anglo-Boer war at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ Poorly fed and parented children produced weak and useless soldiers. As such, public health campaigns included classes on mothering.⁵⁵ Proper mothering was considered a ‘productive service’ to the broader ‘community’ and by extension, the nation.⁵⁶

⁵³ Brian Moore and Michelle Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven*; Henrice Altink, *Destined for a Life of Service: Defining Afro-Jamaican Womanhood 1865 – 1938* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’ in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 87 – 151.

⁵⁵ Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood,’ 103.

⁵⁶ Anna Davin, 102.

In Jamaica, however, this discourse took on a different spin. The focus was not so much eugenically oriented but rather the perceived inadequacy of the Afro-Jamaican family, with its prevalence of illegitimacy and single mother-run households, in the overall socio-economic progress of Jamaican society. Many philanthropic and voluntary organizations focused on educating and influencing the families of the working poor on issues such as birth control, nutrition and sanitation.⁵⁷ Improving the upcoming generation was imperative in building a better and brighter future for Jamaican society.⁵⁸ In 1922, the Child Welfare Committee stated in its report that the

‘...potential value of the child to the community and the economic loss sustained by ill – use and wastage are matters that deeply affect the welfare of the island and there is in Jamaica room for more than its present population.’⁵⁹

As a result, early voluntary organizations such as the Upwards and Onwards Society (1903) promoted Christian education and the creation of domestic schools to train women.⁶⁰ Similarly, the Women’s Social Service Club (1918) encouraged leadership among elite and middle class women especially in the areas of social

⁵⁷ Dalea Bean, ‘Jamaican Women and World Wars I and II (Dissertation, Dept of History, University of the West Indies, 2007).

⁵⁸ John Maxwell, ‘Social Welfare and National Development – Some Innovative Approaches’ A Child Development Project. Regional Pre-School Child Development Project, Dept of Extra Mural Studies (A.U.W.I – Unicef Project, 1973).

⁵⁹ *Minutes of the Legislative Council 1922* Appendix XXVIII (Kingston, Jamaica: Government Printing Office), 1.

⁶⁰ Vassell, ‘Voluntary Women’s Associations in Jamaica,’ 16. This dissertation contains a list of voluntary women’s associations starting from as early as 1872 (16 – 24). The Scottish wife of a Presbyterian Minister established the Upwards and Onwards Society in 1903.

welfare and the promotion of childcare.⁶¹ The Child Saving League (1916) and Jamaica Save the Children Fund (1938) emphasized health care services and general care of children through the creation of crèches and play centers for the children of working mothers in urban areas.⁶² Organizations like the WSSC lobbied the government for better support in training girls in domestic work, establishing crèches and better homes for the poor.⁶³ By the 1930s, the colonial state depended on many of these organizations, including the Salvation Army, for assistance in areas of juvenile reformation, probation work and providing services for the physically and mentally disabled.

Many of these women's voluntary associations, along with other philanthropic organizations, however, reinforced existing race and class dimensions within society.⁶⁴ Since the nineteenth century, social work was considered an ideal space for women because they were regarded as the social nurturers of mankind.⁶⁵ Organizations such as the Women's Self Help Society (1879) taught 'the working poor (especially the women) how to live [in an

⁶¹ Vassell, 18. Judith DeCordova, an influential Jamaican Jew and Nellie Latrielle, a white Jamaican founded the Women's Social Service Club (1918) within the broader context of enfranchising vote for upper and middle class women. This was successfully instituted in 1919.

⁶² Vassell, 20. The Jamaican Save the Children fund was the first voluntary association established by women of the black middle class - Una Marson and Amy Bailey.

⁶³ Vassell 27; *The Daily Gleaner*, May 10, 1919, p 21.

⁶⁴ Vassell, 12 – 13.

⁶⁵ Joan French and Honor Ford Smith, *Women, Work and Organisation in Jamaica 1900 – 1944* (Sistren Research 1983, n.p.) 168 – 169.

attempt] to stabilise the [social] system to ensure its perpetuation.’⁶⁶ These ‘Lady Bountifuls’ were essential to the ongoing civilizing mission which sought to create an ‘industrious work force’ through the ‘control of the social and reproductive capacity of black women.’⁶⁷ Much of this need for control was founded upon race and class prejudice.

In 1877, the Jamaican colonial administration convened the Commission to Enquire into the Condition of the Juvenile Population in response to complaints of the large number of children roaming the island. In the final report, the commissioners argued that Afro-Jamaican parents were not invested in educating and caring for their children. Furthermore, they blamed illegitimacy rather than economic hardship as the underlying factor for crime and a poor quality of life among the lower classes. New research, however, has revealed that Afro-Jamaicans often challenged, appropriated and redefined elements of this larger discourse on citizenship and respectability in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁸ What is clear, however, is that the illusion of respectability, that is the acceptance of Victorian values and ideals, did not remove the economic and political structural inequalities that kept the laboring population poor. Rather,

⁶⁶ French and Ford-Smith, 176; Vassell, ‘Voluntary Women’s Associations,’ 12; Lady Musgrave, wife of Governor Musgrave, founded the Women’s Self Help Society in 1879. The mandate of the organization was to train ‘fallen gentlewomen’ in the ‘womanly’ skills such as embroidery. Her husband Governor Musgrave also established the Institute of Jamaica (1879) for the promotion of arts, literature and sciences in the colony.

⁶⁷ French and Ford-Smith, 180.

⁶⁸ Erna Brodber, *The Second Generation of Freeman in Jamaica*, 143; Henrice Altink, *Destined for a Life of Service*, 6 – 7.

it was the notion of 'social control' that undergirded this broader discourse on citizenship and respectability. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Poor Relief Administration of the early twentieth century.

Historically, the Puritan conceptualization of poverty held the "pauper morally and physically culpable for his condition."⁶⁹ As a result many societies adopted a punitive approach to dealing with the poor. In sixteenth century Britain, for example, the government removed parish forms of relief and instituted a more centralized system of poor relief that required the registration of the destitute.⁷⁰ Frances Fox-Piven and Richard Cloward argued that poor relief was established in Britain so as to control the displaced poor during periods of extreme drought and socio-economic hardship.⁷¹ Expanding the structure of relief-giving alleviated hardship and stemmed civil disorder during periods of mass unemployment or natural disasters. During periods of economic boom and stability, governments restrict relief to force the population to work. Regulation, therefore, was a key element in providing relief. As British society became more industrialized the subsequent displacement of labor forced the solidification of poor relief structures through the increase in poor taxes and legislation. There was also the intensification of work relief programs to encourage persons to work rather than

⁶⁹ Richard Carter, 'The Almshouse Test: Deterring the Poor Under the 1880 Poor Relief Act' Seminar Paper 1, 1990 – 1991 (Department of History, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados).

⁷⁰ Fox-Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, 17.

⁷¹ Fox-Piven and Cloward, 25.

engage in vagrancy and begging.⁷² Legislative reforms to poor relief in 1834 created a more centralized system of regulating relief and abolished indoor relief for the physically and mentally disabled. In place of the almshouse, the state instituted workhouses to require recipients to earn their relief. More importantly, this was used to deter the able-bodied from staying on relief for an extended period. The New Poor Law, therefore, ‘was not so much intended to help the unfortunate as to stigmatize the self confessed failures of society’ and “‘announce[d] to the world that poverty is a crime.’⁷³ Anglophone Caribbean societies, therefore, attempted to transplant elements of British poor relief policy in colonial societies especially after Emancipation in 1838.

Prior to Emancipation, the state made provisions only for poor Euro-Jamaicans including widows and orphans. The enslaved did not qualify for assistance in this way because plantation owners were expected to make provisions for their general welfare. After Emancipation, however, the colonial state was forced to extend social services to the formerly enslaved especially after the cholera epidemics of the 1850s.⁷⁴ Janet Speirs, in her work on poor relief in the nineteenth century, argued that natural disaster, public health crises, severe economic depressions as well as the threat of civil disobedience often required

⁷² Fox-Piven and Cloward, 25.

⁷³ Fox –Piven and Cloward, 31. Footnote 64 discusses the rise of the Speenhamland Plan and its impact on the labor market.

⁷⁴ Patrick Bryan, *Social Welfare and Philanthropy in Jamaica*; John Maxwell ‘Caribbean Social Work’.

administrators to extend relief beyond racial and class lines throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁵

In general, Caribbean societies attempted to replicate elements of early British poor relief administration that predated the 1834 adjustments. Colonial governments placed responsibility for relief giving in parish vestries and parochial boards. In Jamaica, each parish established its own culture of poor relief while the Jamaican colonial state maintained major institutions such as the Lunatic Asylum and the Public Hospital. Some parishes provided a poor house (indoor) for the chronic sick, indigent and physical disabled. Others provided alternate relief (outdoor) such as nutrition, clothing or a small, temporary monetary allowance.⁷⁶ Each parish also established its own set of qualifications for accessing relief. In general, there were several similarities. Persons requesting relief had to show economic need. They had to show that their income had fallen below the poverty line especially as a result of a physical disability or illness.⁷⁷ The second criterion was moral solidity, much of which was tied to religious affiliation. Those most deserving of relief not only suffered from economic hardship but also maintained a consistent Christian walk. Such practices not only discriminated against the youth, who were most likely to be secular in orientation, but also reinforced notions of the settled and unsettled poor.

⁷⁵ Janet Speirs, 'Poor Relief and Charity: A Study of Social Ideas and Practices in Post Emancipation Jamaica' (MPhil History, University of the West Indies Mona, Jamaica, 1999).

⁷⁶ Speirs, 'Poor Relief and Charity,' 39.

⁷⁷ Speirs, 117.

Contemporary observers identified the settled poor as those who owned land or a house and were characterized as being ‘industrious, prudent, devoted to public life and duty.’⁷⁸ In contrast, the unsettled poor referred to those who were considered ‘socially alienated’ with very little affiliation to family or religious institutions, owned no land and were not committed to public life and duty. Local and central government considered – beggars, thieves, obeah men and women, prostitutes and jobbing gangs - particularly dangerous and disruptive to the peaceful running of society.⁷⁹ These notions of the settled and unsettled poor continued into the early twentieth century and were essential in describing the respectable and un-respectable poor. Economic crisis, however, often challenged these notions of poverty as all members of society were negatively impacted by the downturn of the Jamaican economy.

Severe economic hardship during the 1850s and 60s disrupted class boundaries as many property owners were placed on the pauper roll. This, however, was incongruous, because owning property was a symbol of social and economic rank in society.⁸⁰ Janet Speirs’ work on parish tax relief committees revealed that properties were devalued due to the economic crisis of the 1850s that had been generated by the introduction of free trade on the British market.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Speirs, 117.

⁷⁹ Speirs, 134 – 35. Jobbing gangs comprised of both genders between the ages of fourteen years to mid-twenties who hire themselves out to sugar cane estates for seasonal work.

⁸⁰ Speirs, 81.

⁸¹ Speirs, 82.

This decline in property as well as housing values meant that there was an equal decline in the amount of house and land taxes collected by parochial boards. She concludes, therefore, that by 1865 land and housing were no longer viable indicators of wealth in Jamaican society. As a result, officials had to reevaluate the kind of relief provided to varying classes of recipients.

Tax relief, therefore, became an important form of relief giving during the 1850s and 60s.⁸² In other areas of alternate relief, in 1860, the Kingston Common Council introduced a policy of free water rations for the poor so as to supplement the existing inadequate allowance of one and half pennies a day.⁸³ In contrast, in the parish of St. Thomas in the Vale, administrators often capped monetary relief, thereby leaving a significant portion of their pauper population without relief.⁸⁴ On a whole, however, the majority of the individuals receiving relief were the aged and infirm as well as the mentally and physically disabled. Parochial boards also retained guardianship of orphaned and deserted children until the age of ten years.⁸⁵ Many of these children remained out pensioners (persons on outdoor relief) until 1857 when the first industrial schools were established.

Evidence brought before the 1877 Juvenile Commission revealed that the progeny of the laboring population were extremely visible within the discussions of poverty. Witness testimonies before the commissioners revealed that economic

⁸² Speirs, 83 – 84.

⁸³ Speirs, 110 – 112.

⁸⁴ Speirs, 113.

⁸⁵ Speirs, 97.

conditions were such that children, from as early as eight years old, were seasonally employed on estates in trash houses and were hoeing canes by the age of twelve. Many of these children established intimate connections at an early age and girls were 'in the family way' from as early as fourteen years.⁸⁶ Mr. George R Phillips Esq. in his testimony described jobbing gangs

'...These wandering gangs generally sleep in the trash house, men and women together...the boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and twenty three like to sleep in the trash house...I hear a great deal of immorality among these gangs.'⁸⁷

Witnesses believed that due to the lack of structure in the lives of aforementioned children, as adults they would swell the ranks of the unsettled poor thereby becoming non-productive citizens of Jamaican society.

Major Sources on Poor Relief and Industrial Schools in the Caribbean

Two major documents, *Report upon the Condition of the Juvenile Population in Jamaica* and *Report of the Commission of Poor Relief* (Barbados), provide the basis for much of this work on poor relief in the Caribbean. Both reports heavily represent the perspective of the elite on social and economic issues of the period as well as their views on the laboring populations. Leonard P. Fletcher, in his article, 'The Evolution of Poor Relief in Barbados 1838 – 1900,' argued that the report represented the position and interests of the planter class rather than

⁸⁶ *Report of Commission upon the Condition of the Juvenile Population of Jamaica* (Government Printing Establishment, 1879) Appendix A, 92. Hereafter referred to as the Juvenile Commission.

⁸⁷ *Juvenile Commission*, Appendix B 'Evidence Taken at Montego Bay Falmouth and St. Ann's Bay,' 10.

paupers.⁸⁸ Both groups of commissioners ignored the impact of low wages and the high cost of living on the quality of life of laboring populations, the majority of whom were black and depended on sugar estates for their survival.⁸⁹ Richard Carter concluded that in spite of the suggestions of the commission, the overall report revealed that there existed a ‘continuity of thought having its roots in the slavery doctrine of the moral and psychological baseness of ... blacks.’⁹⁰

Led by leading religious and official representatives, the Jamaican commissioners interviewed members of the elite and merchant classes including ministers of religion and administrative staff associated with education and public health. As a result, the Jamaican document has been viewed as a discourse on education policy and social conditions in Jamaica.⁹¹ While this is true, the report also offers a clear insight into broader discussions of poverty and class in Jamaica. Commissioners, throughout the report, overemphasized the lack of parental supervision, juvenile vagrancy, impermanent sexual relationships and crime. One member of the committee, Rev. D. East felt compelled to challenge such stereotypes by attaching an addendum to the report stating that there were many families that maintained control of their children, lived respectable lives and

⁸⁸ Leonard Fletcher, ‘The Evolution of Poor Relief in Barbados 1838 – 1900’, *Journal of Caribbean History* vol. 26: # 2 1992, (171 – 209) 185.

⁸⁹ Fletcher, ‘The Evolution of Poor Relief,’ 184.

⁹⁰ Richard Carter, ‘The Development of Social Assistance Policy in Barbados Since 1875’ (Cave Hill, Barbados: Dept of Government and Sociology, 1986), 27.

⁹¹ Shirley Gordon, ‘Documents which have Guided Educational Policy in the West Indies – No. 5: Report upon the Condition of the Juvenile Population of Jamaica, 1879,’ *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 9 #4 (December 1963) p. 15 – 24.

invested in their children's success and education.⁹² Not all Afro-Jamaicans failed to invest in and commit to their families and many adhered to Victorian ideals of respectability.

Nonetheless, negative perceptions of the Afro-Jamaican family continued into the early twentieth century. Witnesses ignored issues such as the displacement of skilled laborers like seamstresses due to the increased importation of ready-made material, or the seasonal orientation of estate labor that forced young people to move from parish to parish in search of work. Poverty underscored rural to urban migration as well as external migration, and many displaced internal migrants eventually settled in shantytowns while searching for work. In times of hardship, many turned to the government for assistance through the poor relief system. Inevitably, this placed undue pressure on the local poor relief administration in towns such as Kingston. The Kingston Common Council often failed to recoup the cost of assistance from the parishes from which the paupers originated. It was within this broader context of displacement, poverty and unemployment that Kingston, as the nation's capital, was perceived as the centre of immorality and indiscretion - where youth from the country supposedly became drawn into multiple temporary relationships and in the process producing ragged children whom they could not afford to support.⁹³

⁹² *Juvenile Commission*, vi.

⁹³ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 28, 1890, 'The Waifs and Strays of Kingston.'

In Barbados, the *Report of the Commission of Poor Relief* (1875) similarly promoted the use of industrial schools in that island.⁹⁴ The commissioners deemed that institutions such as the industrial school were essential to controlling ‘juvenile vagrancy, idleness and depredation.’⁹⁵ In 1883, when the Barbadian Assembly enacted the Reformatory and Industrial School’s Act, the *Times* commented that ‘reformatories are a very powerful means for arresting the march of pauperism and crime.’⁹⁶ Such a statement reinforced notions of social control as a key function of citizenship and promoted the belief that illegitimacy was the greatest cause of crime. Delinquent children were an unquestionable burden on poor rates in the island.⁹⁷ Administrators in both islands believed that Industrial Schools, therefore, would provide inmates with educational opportunities for pauper children, many of whose parents were incapable of supporting them within the current economic conditions. This included training for boys in handcrafts and domestic service for girls. Proper arrangements would be made for their licensing out and apprenticeship, after they had completed their stay at the industrial school. Other areas of concern included the proper regulation of child labor as well as the expansion of legislation to facilitate state interference in the home so as to force parents to maintain, protect and educate their children.

⁹⁴ *Report of the Commission on Poor Relief* (Barbados: Barclay and Fraser, 1878). Hereafter referred to as the Mitchinson Report.

⁹⁵ Carter, ‘The Development of Social Assistance Policy,’ 29.

⁹⁶ Carter, 46.

⁹⁷ Carter, 47.

In Jamaica, the terms industrial schools and reformatories were used interchangeably to describe state/privately run institutions that catered to children of unfortunate circumstances. Negative perceptions of public service institutions such as the Alms House (Poor Houses) and Industrial Schools meant that many parents, despite their dire economic condition, refused to turn over their children to the state or seek in-door relief for their sick children by accepting admittance to parish Alms Houses. It was within this context that commissioners declared that

“...our reformatory system requires to be better explained to the people. To the Black people generally it means simply a place where children are sent for punishment, not for education and improvement, the prevalent impression is, that it is only for criminals’⁹⁸

It was the desire of many well-meaning members of civic society to promote industrial schools as the ideal space in which to re-socialize children of the laboring classes. Calls for more industrial schools to house children in the poor relief and prison systems continued into the early twentieth century.

Similar discussions occurred in the island of Barbados. In 1875, Acting Governor Sanford Feeling established a commission to examine the conditions of the poor in Barbados. The Mitchinson Commission, and its subsequent report published in 1877, presented a nuanced discussion of poverty and class as it existed in Barbados. Similarly, the commissioners attributed the main causes of pauperism to the desertion of male parents, migration from rural to urban areas,

⁹⁸ *Juvenile Commission*, Appendix A, 83.

and a general aversion to work and thrift. Just like the *Juvenile Commission*, the Mitchinson Report provided a comprehensive survey of the poor relief system in Barbados. It revealed that both public and private institutions worked together to provide relief for the poor. The Commissioners, on a whole, concluded that the system was defective and made recommendations for reform.

The suggestions made by the Mitchinson Commission were based on the British Poor Law Act of 1834, which centralized poor relief under a new board. As a result, the 1880 reform placed poor relief under a central authority called the Poor Law Board.⁹⁹ Likewise in 1886, the Jamaican legislature established the Board of Supervision to oversee the administration of poor relief in the island. Administrators hoped that these boards would re-organize and institute policies that would improve the overall structure of poor relief in both countries. In reality, these bodies had limited room to make fundamental changes to the system. Actual responsibility for relief remained in the hands of local government authorities, namely parochial boards and vestries. In fact, after 1880 structural distinctions in Barbados were retained within social policy through the strengthening of vagrancy legislations as a form of social control. Poor gentlefolk were to be provided with private rather than public assistance a move allowed by the 1897 Victorian Emigration Act, which ‘set up a fund to assist the emigration of

⁹⁹ Carter 41. The commission in Jamaica was convened two years after the one in Barbados.

“distressed gentlewomen reduced in circumstances”.¹⁰⁰ This left the laboring poor to depend on the almshouse for support.

Almshouses and industrial schools were the main instruments of deterrence and control in poor relief policy. Generally, outdoor relief, which constituted assistance in the form of money, food or medical assistance, was considered considerably cheaper than indoor relief.¹⁰¹ Indoor relief, as institutionalized through the Almshouse, in the Caribbean, and the Workhouse, in Britain allowed for greater ‘discipline’ and ‘control’ to ‘engender moral reform and industry.’¹⁰² This trend continued into the twentieth century as the masters and matrons of almshouses were considered instrumental in maintaining discipline in these institutions. The Barbadian commissioners argued that ‘the best prophylactic against pauperism [was] the encouragement of thrift on the part of the working classes.’¹⁰³ Ideally, time spent in these institutions should deter vagrancy, idleness and immorality. These institutions, however, failed to achieve these goals.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in Barbados, like Jamaica, almost all almshouses were overcrowded, had unsound infrastructure, were poorly ventilated, extremely unsanitary and lacked on-site mortuaries.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Carter, 48 – 49.

¹⁰¹ Richard Carter, *The Almshouse Test*, 15; Janet Speirs, ‘Poor Relief and Charity,’ 74 – 75.

¹⁰² Carter, *The Almshouse Test*, 16.

¹⁰³ Carter, *The Development of Social Assistance Policy*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *The Almshouse Test*, 16.

Almshouses often housed the chronic sick and physically and mentally disabled. But many institutions lacked separate facilities for men and women, which in many instances resulted in a chronic ‘want of personal cleanliness.’¹⁰⁵ St. Mary’s Asylum in Barbados, was described as ‘perilously unwholesome.’ In Jamaica, the public was horrified at the news of an 86-year-old black man, housed at the Union Alms House in Admiral’s Pen, who died from an infestation of maggots in his throat and mouth.¹⁰⁶ Relieving officers spoke of a general resistance of the recipients to enter into the Alms House. One witness to the Juvenile Commissioner recounted a personal experience with a poor relief applicant:

‘...the other day...a woman ... asked me for money. I told her, I could not give her any money, but that there was a place vacant in the Alms House, if she liked to go there. When I told her this, she burst out crying, and told me that although she had had no food to eat that day, she would rather lie down on the door step and die than go the Alms House. Afterwards when I found that she was really a respectable person, I was sorry for having said so to her.’¹⁰⁷

Both Barbadians and Jamaicans, on a whole, equated institutionalization in the almshouse with disfiguration and social alienation.¹⁰⁸ Due to the horrendous conditions in these institutions, many people opted not accept indoor relief unless in dire circumstances. Willingness to enter, therefore, constituted a real signal of

¹⁰⁵ Carter, 17.

¹⁰⁶ British National Archives (BNA) Colonial Office (CO) 137/485/64 ‘Confidential Correspondence’ Mr. Abraham Hyams to Robert G. W. Herbert, Under-Secretary for the Colonies 17th July 1877.

¹⁰⁷ *Juvenile Commission*, Appendix A, p. 87.

¹⁰⁸ Carter, *The Almshouse Test*, 22. The board stopped furnishing its annual report to the legislature by the 1940s.

need. The Almshouse in the Caribbean, at least in the nineteenth century, was the central operating system for controlling the poor.

The story of poor relief in the nineteenth century sets the foundation for poor relief policy in the twentieth century. In Barbados the changes of 1880 remained in effect until 1928 when the law was amended after the ‘Commission of Enquiry into the Conditions of Public Health in Barbados.’ By this time, the Poor Law Board had outlived its usefulness due to the fact that it had great difficulty maintaining a quorum.¹⁰⁹ Instead, the power of relief became the responsibility of the Public Health Inspector and the Poor Law inspector. The focus here was a preventative approach to the alleviation of poverty through improvement of medical services to the population as a whole - a move that predated recommendations of the Moyne Commission.¹¹⁰ A similar investigation on poor relief and poor houses in Jamaica in 1936 brought no significant changes to the poor relief administration. In fact, by 1938 the Jamaican government failed to take decisive measures on the high cost of poor relief in the island.

Very few historical texts discuss poor relief and social welfare in Jamaica and the region. Those that exist, however, help to place events in Jamaica within a broader context of regional debates on poverty, powerlessness and its impact on class relations. In 1875 a member of the Mitchinson Commission argued that

¹⁰⁹ Carter, ‘The Development of Social Assistance Policy,’ 59.

¹¹⁰ Carter, 59.

‘chronic poverty can never with safety or justice be dealt with by causal or voluntary relief. It is perhaps the inevitable condition of overpopulation and low wages, but, as such, is a legitimate burden on land and property’,¹¹¹

Yet in the Caribbean, like in Colonial America and other European nations, the colonial state attempted to delegitimize this claim on society. In the twentieth century, however, all governments were forced to extend the reach of relief assistance especially in the advent of the Great Depression during and after the 1930s. An assessment of the Jamaican state, however, suggests that very few efforts were made to alleviate hardship among its citizens.

In fact, both John Maxwell’s and Patrick Bryan’s survey of social welfare in Jamaica reveal that outside of basic relief provisions, the colonial state failed to engage in developing a wide range of social welfare services.¹¹² This study, however, shows that the colonial state lacked the financial and human resources to make any really significant improvements to poor relief. Much of this was also due to the fact that the colonial state remained ambiguous towards the necessity of social welfare institutions in the island. As a result, between 1900 and 1938 there was a surge in the number of mutual and friendly societies as well as philanthropic and charity organizations in the island. These organizations emerged as a result of negative consequences of urbanization, unemployment and

¹¹¹ Carter quotes *The West Indian* (Barbados) March 17, 1874.

¹¹² Bryan, *Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, 20 – 21; Maxwell ‘Caribbean Social Work’ 8 – 9.

economic depressions thereby providing assistance for its members where the state had failed to do so.

Generally the literature fails to produce any real insight into the actual workings of poor relief in Jamaica, especially in the early twentieth century. This investigation, therefore, establishes the structure of poor relief as well as the major players in the administration in Jamaica at the turn of the twentieth century. It then focuses more specifically on state policies towards children in industrial schools so as to clearly elucidate the issues affecting the systematic development of a social welfare policy prior to 1938. This assessment provides a new perspective towards analyzing the road to increased political autonomy and decolonization in Jamaica during the interwar years.

The general historiography of the interwar years focuses on the class war that erupted as a result of social and civil unrest. It goes even further to highlight the extensive marginalization of the black middle class, black power, and religion. This persistence of class and race discrimination was a result of the continued inaccessibility to land and by extension the political arena. As such, events during this period chronicled the ongoing struggle of the poor and powerless in Jamaica and their awakening in the face of social, religious, economic, and political oppression and discrimination by the colonial state and wealthier classes.¹¹³

¹¹³ Clive Y. Thomas, *The Poor and The Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988) Preface.

While accepting this premise, my research adds another dimension to this discourse by examining the interaction of the colonial state with the laboring classes through the poor relief administration. This focus on poor relief does not automatically suggest that there were no improvements in the administration of medical and educational services prior to 1938. Rather it views poor relief as a tool through which discussions, by the elite, of poverty and citizenship take place in the island. Due to this approach, the research refers only to joint ventures between the colonial government and philanthropic organizations. Current gendered historiographies already examine the role of philanthropic and voluntary institutions in social and moral reform. These works highlight the extensive emphasis on the ideology of proper motherhood, family life and marriage within these organizations. Assessing, therefore, the dynamics of the inner workings of relief giving in the twentieth century expands the dialogue on social conditions as well as state policy on poverty alleviation. Such an investigation reveals that the colonial state, including local government (as representatives of state policy in various parishes), through agents of the poor relief administration, engaged in its own brand of re-socialization and training in proper citizenry.

Limitations of Sources

This research relies heavily on government records and Jamaica's foremost newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*. In 1938, the Colonial Office required colonial governments to fill out a 'Social Welfare Questionnaire' in preparation for the

arrival of the WIRC. These records along with the witness testimonies in the British National Archives illuminated the inadequacies of the Caribbean social services as well as the poor conditions under which Caribbean peoples lived. Similarly, the correspondence of the Colonial Secretary's Office in Jamaica revealed the position of state officials, relief officials, parochial boards and relief recipients on the poor relief administration and child welfare in Jamaica. Minutes of poor relief committees, located in the parochial board records of the Jamaica Archives, provided significant insight into the financial and social difficulties of relief administration to children. This information was supplemented by the Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision throughout the period as well as commentaries in the *Daily Gleaner*.

Inevitably, due to the nature of the sources, the voices that speak the loudest are those of state officials, civic society, as well as administrators of industrial schools. Very little personal information could be found on girls attending the Government Industrial School in Stony Hill during the interwar years. It has been possible, however, to tease out information about relief recipients because many of them, including women and children, challenged the relief regulations instituted by the state. Nonetheless, this research unearths a considerable amount of information on children in industrial schools as well as the foundation of juvenile rehabilitation centers in Jamaica. It establishes the inner workings of poor relief and provides access to sources to engage in further work on social welfare

policy, social work, and child welfare in Jamaica in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Structure of Research

Social welfare in Jamaica, particularly during the period under review, has always been underfunded due to the unstable economic condition of the region. Poor relief received its funding through the parish poor rates (formerly the house tax). The global recession of the 1930s and persistent economic hardship required the colonial state and local government to limit the number of persons who accessed both indoor and outdoor relief. This forced the colonial government to intervene in the dialectic of poverty, class, citizenship and gender by creating a hierarchy of poverty in which destitution was defined by ones capacity to provide physical indicators of their economic suffering.

Chapter Two, entitled *The Poor is with us always*, examines how economic suffering translated into physical suffering, that is, sickness, physical and mental disabilities. It concludes that those on the verge of destitution were discriminated against due to their ‘able-bodiedness’ and were thus less likely to receive assistance. Attempts to define ‘worthiness’ required the state to empower Inspectors of the Poor (originally also called Relieving Officers) to police destitution. One’s escape from destitution depended upon the successful appeal to the Inspector and Assistant Inspectors of the Poor. These individuals, in turn,

determined an individual's real level of destitution. Access to relief, therefore, occurred on the basis of the IP's ability to gauge an individual's level of poverty.

Regulation of relief was an essential part of controlling the distribution of state assistance. Inspectors of the Poor also visited recipients to personally reexamine their socio-economic situation, therefore, allowing them access to the private sphere of the laboring population.¹¹⁴ These inspections provided administrators with an opportunity to intervene directly on the family life of women of the working class, thereby perpetuating myths of lower class social and moral practices.

In chapter Three, *Eradicate before you Educate*, assesses how terms such as permanent and temporary concubinage and illegitimacy suggested that domestic instability was a choice rather than consequence of economic insecurity. The continued application of such stereotypes created the illusion that the island was under siege by juvenile delinquents. An exploration of figures of the number of children brought before the courts between 1931 and 1935 revealed that many of the children brought before the courts were destitute, displaced, or orphaned rather than criminal. Relief, therefore, becomes a useful tool through which to examine how the state police working class family structures and attempted to impose Victorian ideals of the family upon them. More importantly, this ability to

¹¹⁴ Brodber, in the conclusion of *Second Generation of Freedmen*, argues that members of the laboring population often resented the intervention of the state in their private lives and as a result refused to access relief.

intervene in the lives of the laboring population was especially clear through the workings of industrial schools in the island. The state used Industrial Schools to re-socialize orphans, juvenile offenders, abandoned, and destitute children into proper citizens ‘that knew their place’.

Chapter Four, *A Happier Jamaica Lies Ahead*, reveals how the education of industrial school children reflected contemporary notions of citizenship and how class becomes an instrumental tool in this discourse. It also assesses how public perceptions of criminality negatively affected the reintegration of former school inmates into society. School administrators blamed members of the judicial, penal and relief administrations of reinforcing public perceptions by referring to inmates as delinquents. Furthermore, the absence of an adequate aftercare program hampered the efforts of school administrators to assist children in the process of reintegration at the end of their tenure. The chapter concludes that the ambiguity of the colonial government in regards to the effectiveness of industrial schools resulted in the general absence of infrastructural and human resource development in this sector. Chapter Five, *Conclusion*, summarizes the overall findings of the research project. It highlights the implications of financial, human resource and infrastructural insecurity on the development of poor relief and social welfare policy in the twentieth century and makes suggestions for areas of further research.

Chapter Two

The Poor are with us Always: The Poor Relief Administration in Jamaica during the interwar years

The effect of the economic conditions is such that Poor Relief has grown beyond the machinery existing to handle it.¹

Introduction

The foundation of the Jamaican Poor Relief Administration lay in the significant political and legislative changes that occurred in the late nineteenth century. In 1885, a representative of the Clarendon Parochial Board introduced legislation to centralize the administration of poor relief in the island. This new law placed the responsibility for the supervision of poor relief in a body to be called the Board of Supervision.² Prior to this, individual parochial boards established their³ own cultures of relief giving by either maintaining an Alms

¹ British National Archives (BNA) Colonial Office (CO) 950/137 Edith Clarke, Secretary to the Board of Supervision: From her testimony before the West Indian Royal Commission (1938)

² Mr. Craig of the Clarendon Parochial Board introduced the idea of establishing a central body to regulate the running of Poor Relief in the island, similar to the institution that existed in Scotland, in the Legislative Council in 1885. His idea received the support of Governor Norman who encouraged him to push ahead with a bill. However, the parochial boards viewed the instituting of a central body as an affront to their newly attained freedoms under the 1884 constitution. The Mayor of Kingston along with 10 members of the Kingston Common Council resigned in protest and at least half of the remaining parochial boards submitted petitions against the Legislation. BNA CO137/520/58; CO137/526/6; CO137/526/9; CO137/526/12; CO137/526/28 – 29; CO137/526/31.

House or providing alternate means of assistance.⁴ These changes formalized the mechanisms for policing and housing the poor by combining both in-door (alms houses) and out-door (alternate assistance) relief as the two main arms of state sponsored assistance available to the Jamaican population. State sponsored assistance supplemented rather than replaced existing traditional community networks which provided social and economic support in times of hardship.

The mandate of the Board of Supervision (BS) required its members to oversee the running of the poor relief system by serving as mediators between the parochial boards and the central government.⁵ Each parochial board, however, continued to maintain as well as provide the machinery and institutions to police and house the poor. Inspectors of Poor, also known as Relieving Officers, ensured the effectiveness of the administration by acting as policing agents and brokers. Relieving Officers intervened in the system on behalf of paupers. Parochial boards theoretically acted in the interest of those who received relief as well as the ratepayer, who paid their taxes to the parochial board; but parochial boards relied heavily on Inspectors of Poor to ensure the efficient running of the system. As representatives of the Board of Supervision and the parochial boards, Inspectors of Poor intervened in the system by determining who accessed assistance as well as the distribution of relief, while at the same time stemming occurrences of fraud

⁴ Janet Spiers, 'Poor Relief and Charity: A Study of Social Ideas and Practices in the Study of Post Emancipation Jamaica' (MPhil (History) University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica 1999).

⁵ BNA CO 137/526/3 'Law 6 of 1886' Submissions of Petitions against the bill.'

and abuse. These officers interacted daily with the economy of poverty and, through these experiences, re-interpreted, manipulated and bent existing legislation so as to select recipients worthy of receiving relief. As a result, they influenced broader discussions on poverty and morality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This chapter establishes the institutional mechanisms associated with the relief of pauperism in Jamaica during the early twentieth century. In 1921, the black population of Jamaica accounted for 77% of the total population (660,240).⁶ The breakdown for the colored, white, Chinese and East Indian population were 18.3%, 1.7%, 0.4% and 2.2% of the population respectively.⁷ Black Jamaicans dominated the relief process due to the fact that the general population was black. Minority groups such as the Indian, Chinese and white population tended to rely more heavily on their community networks for support during times of ill-health and economic hardship. They were, therefore, underrepresented in archival sources and government correspondence. An examination of the major participants, which included the aged and infirm, single mothers, orphans and juvenile delinquents, most of whom were black, reveals the ways in which individuals exercised agency while navigating the bureaucracy of the Jamaican Poor Relief Administration. Over time Caribbean cultures, like Jamaica, structurally and ideologically altered the inner workings of English poor law due

⁶ George Roberts, *Population of Jamaica* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 64 – 65.

⁷ Roberts, 65.

to the complex intersection of poverty, gender and class in the allocation of limited social and financial resources.

Poor Relief in Nineteenth Century Jamaica

As a former colony of Britain (1655 - 1962), Jamaica inherited from Britain its administrative institutions and laws, including poor relief and general social policy. The cultural evolution of philanthropy and charity in the Caribbean, however, differed from that of Britain. During slavery, philanthropy occurred through the donation of monies to improve the education of the less fortunate members of the white population in the island. More fortunate persons also bequeathed money to take care of widows and children. However, race and class oftentimes determined the general distribution of relief during times of natural disaster or extreme destitution.⁸ In many instances, wealthier members of the colored community infrequently received assistance from the government to recoup losses incurred during natural disasters.⁹ The enslaved, in particular, relied on the planters to provide the basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter and healthcare. Therefore, the religious and philanthropic fervor that spurred the growth of charitable organizations in Britain in the mid eighteenth century did not directly influence the Caribbean until the arrival of missionary societies in the late

⁸ Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean 1624 – 1783* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) 166 – 67.

⁹ Mulcahy, 182 – 3.

eighteenth century.¹⁰ However, it was the ex-slaves, rather than the elite, who sought relief from churches and missionary societies in the post emancipation period.

Chronic economic hardship brought on by falling sugar prices during the 1850s and 60s forced many Jamaicans and other Caribbean populations to migrate to Latin America and other countries in the region in search of better economic opportunities. Those who remained were beset by two major cholera epidemics between 1850 and 1855, along with smaller outbreaks of small pox, typhoid and scarlet fever, which wreaked havoc on the Jamaican population as well as the wider region. An estimated 40, 000 – 50, 000 Jamaicans died in both epidemics combined and approximately 200,000 persons died regional wide from cholera epidemics in the mid nineteenth century.¹¹ The disease was considered particularly aggressive in Kingston where approximately 4,000 – 6,000 persons or 10 – 15% of an estimated population of 40,000 – 50,000 died.¹² These epidemics put extensive pressure on existing resources and required the central government to increase funding and expand policies associated with public health, quarantines and relief.¹³

¹⁰ Patrick Bryan, *Philanthropy and Social Welfare in Jamaica*, 11. The phrase ‘the church’ here refers broadly to the Moravians, Baptists, Presbyterian and Wesleyan missionary societies that established branches in the region during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹¹ Kenneth F. Kiple, ‘Cholera and Race in the Caribbean’ *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 17 no. 1 (May 1985) (157 – 177) 166, 177; See also C.H. Senior ‘The Asiatic Cholera in Jamaica 1850 – 1855 Part 1 and 2’ *Jamaica Journal* vol. 26 no. 2 Dec. 1997 (25 – 42).

¹² Kiple, 166.

¹³ Janet Speirs, “Poor Relief and Charity.”

Policy implementation always took place at the parish level through the parochial board administration. Each parish appointed a 'Pauper or Out-pensioner Committee' that judged applications for outdoor relief, authorized burials of the poor at the parish expense, and arranged for the maintenance of cemeteries. Active throughout the year, these committees and their activities set the tone for practices that continued into the early twentieth century.¹⁴ Janet Speirs' work on poor relief and charity in Jamaica revealed that each parochial board had its own culture of providing assistance. Some parishes admitted paupers into poor houses and provided limited assistance in the form of food and clothing while others provided tax breaks on properties.¹⁵ In contrast, the central government funded the public hospital and lunatic asylum, both of which were located in Kingston.

Underfunding of public health and social services, however, remained an issue throughout the nineteenth century. Members of local government recognized that the number of persons deserving public charity exceeded existing financial, human and infrastructural resources of the island despite changes in eligibility policies after 1854 as well as the steady rise in poor relief appropriations after 1858.¹⁶ The government converted house taxes to poor rates in 1859 in an attempt

¹⁴ Speirs, 39.

¹⁵ Speirs, 40.

¹⁶ Speirs, 55.

to increase funding for poor relief.¹⁷ Poor rates, therefore, provided parochial boards with a steady flow of income to fund almshouses and outdoor relief.

The evolution of poor relief in nineteenth century Jamaica must be viewed in light of the race, gender and class composition of former Caribbean slave societies. Emancipation provided the formerly enslaved with greater cultural, social and economic control over their lives. Yet while Afro-Jamaicans aspired to achieve economic security and social stability, many of their familial and kinship practices failed to conform to European perceptions of marriage and the family. This dichotomy between European and Jamaican laboring class notions of kinship continued to be reflected in the early twentieth century discourse. Notions of political rights and citizenship were couched in terms of one's character and general moral fortitude, both of which the elite posited as lacking among laboring class Jamaicans.¹⁸ Members of the elite described formerly enslaved parents as being 'ignorant, undisciplined and lacking in moral sense.' Consequently, they accordingly '... kn[e]w nothing of the value of protection or education for their children.'¹⁹ Underpinning these discussions was the continued belief that the black Jamaican majority needed the moral guidance of the upper classes. This

¹⁷ Speirs, 40.

¹⁸ Persis Charles "The Name of the Father: Women, Paternity and British Rule in Nineteenth – Century Jamaica" *International Labor and Working Class History* #41 (Spring 1992) pp. 4 – 22.

¹⁹ *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry upon the Condition of the Juvenile Population of Jamaica* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment, 1879) ii. See also Henrice Altink "Imagining Womanhood in Early Twentieth Century Rural Jamaica" *Journal of Caribbean History* vol. 40 no.1 (2006) 64 – 91 and "To Wed or not to Wed?": The Struggle to Define Afro-Jamaican Relationships, 1834 – 1838 *Journal of Social History* Vol. 38 no.1 (Fall 2004).

sense of moral superiority ignored the fact that a history of slavery as well as repeated economic depressions of the late nineteenth century served to keep the average Afro-Jamaican in a perpetual state of economic destitution and insecurity.

The expansion of poor relief in the latter decades of the nineteenth century must be seen as the slow deinstitutionalization of racial segregation in the allocation of charity. In the post emancipation era more persons received poor relief because economic distress was universal rather than race, gender or class specific. As the laboring classes gained greater access to relief, the structural inequalities within Jamaican society systematically impaired their economic, political and social progress through the lack of economic and voting opportunity. A person's ability to participate in the political process was dependent on land ownership and/or the amount of taxes paid each year. Limited access to land ownership, therefore, impaired the participation of the laboring population in the political forum. This process continued after the Morant Bay rebellion (1865) through the introduction of a more paternalistic Crown Colony government that served to expand and centralize the poor relief administration throughout the 1880s. At the same time, however, Crown Colony government rolled back the freedom(s) of laboring class Jamaicans by initially removing the franchise and then in 1884 increased voter property qualifications. Such a move protected white men's sovereignty by disenfranchising the majority black population. Crown Colony government not only undermined the access of the majority of the black

population to political participation but also provided greater avenues for state intervention in the family and kinship arrangements of such families through the poor relief system, reformatories and industrial schools.²⁰

Lowering wages and decreased employment opportunities propelled internal and external migration throughout the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such movement, however, disrupted traditional family structures especially in the urban areas by placing women and children in need of the most relief. The prevalence of juvenile vagrants and delinquents led the administration to convene in 1887 a *Commission of Enquiry to Investigate the Condition of the Juvenile Population* in Jamaica. The commission blamed high levels of illegitimacy, single-parenthood and migration as the underlying factors for the increase in juvenile delinquency and crime in Jamaica. Testimonies further revealed the failings of existing social welfare legislation such as the Reformatories and Industrial Schools, Apprenticeship, Poor Relief, Bastardy and Maintenance Acts, all of which emphasized the centrality of the family, as opposed to the state, in maintaining the social system. This discourse on the role of the family as a form of social control and welfare has continued into the twentieth century.²¹

²⁰ Mimi Sheller, "Acting as Freeman: Subaltern Masculinities in Jamaica and Citizenship in Post-Slavery Jamaica" in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, (eds), *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005) 92.

²¹ This will be dealt with more closely in Chapter 3.

The findings of the Commission eventually led to amendments to the aforementioned laws after 1881. The Act for the Relief of the Poor was further amended in 1886 to facilitate the creation of the Board of Supervision to centralize the administration of poor relief in the island. Thereafter, further laws were introduced and older ones amended and/or expanded to deal with issues such as juvenile delinquency, mental health, public health and instances of economic depression. By the early twentieth century, therefore, the alleviation of poverty in Jamaica became the obligation of the state and local government (the Board of Supervision and the Parochial Boards) through the poor relief system. The church remained an important part of this process but was integrated into a more secularized system of altruism.

The poor relief system in Jamaica reflected many areas of the English Poor Relief. The passage of the new poor laws in Britain in 1834 not only established three Poor Law Commissioners to oversee the running of the poor relief administration but also placed the Work House at the center of the moral economy of pauperism.²² In Britain, other forms of relief such as reformatories, orphanages and outdoor relief (alternate relief) coexisted with the workhouse. Workhouses, however, acted as a social policing agency that deterred the able-bodied from seeking relief from their parish. One's willingness to enter the workhouse immediately confirmed destitution. Once admitted, an inmate's every

²² Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse system 1834 – 1884* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 18.

move and activity were monitored and regulated and they were immediately placed to work on various existing projects. The aim of the English workhouse, therefore, was to deter pauperism, ‘inspire self-discipline and promote the moral authority of government.’²³ This ideological configuration reinforced negative perceptions of pauperism and created a visible distinction between the pauper and the able-bodied as determined by entry to the workhouse. Caribbean societies, such as Jamaica and Barbados, adopted many aspects of the infrastructure and terminology associated with the British poor relief administration during the late nineteenth century. However, one distinct difference between the metropole and the colonies was that the latter used the almshouse (poor house) as the benchmark of pauperism.²⁴ These institutions doubled as infirmaries and housed children, the temporarily and permanently disabled, aged and infirm. The Almshouse/Poorhouse test formed a key part of the policing infrastructure in the Anglo-Caribbean by deterring able-bodied but needy persons from requesting relief.²⁵ Administrators used this test to gauge an individual’s level of desperation and destitution by their willingness to enter the almshouse.

Persons who officially integrated into Caribbean poor relief systems were called paupers. In Jamaica, the Poor Relief Law of 1881 identified two classes of

²³ Driver, 25.

²⁴ In the Anglo - Caribbean, work houses were a part of the parish prison system rather than the poor relief system.

²⁵ Leonard P. Fletcher, ‘The Evolution of Poor Relief in Barbados 1838 – 1900’ *Journal of Caribbean History* vol. 26: # 2 1992, [171 – 209], 187 – 88.

paupers, temporary and permanent. Temporary paupers were often those who were unable to obtain employment as a result of an accident or illness or were seasonally unemployed. A key part of temporary assistance was outdoor relief. The term “outdoor relief” refers to alternate means of assistance. Temporary paupers received a weekly dole (money) from the Inspector of Poor for a set time period. Such relief could also take the form of food, clothing, seeing and walking aids, as well as medical passes for those who could not afford to seek medical assistance. In contrast, permanent paupers possessed ‘neither land nor house, money or valuables, and ... ha[d] no relatives to support them and [were] suffering from chronic infirmity.’²⁶ This definition also included children who had the option of being boarded out, placed in the Almshouse (Poor House), or Industrial School or Reformatory.

Poor Relief in Jamaica differed from that of many other Caribbean territories. Jamaica’s population-to-land density allowed for greater instances of rural to rural as well as rural to urban migration that undermined the capacity of administrative bodies to effectively determine the population of each parish. Furthermore, the depressed economic conditions of the early 20th century required the local administration to facilitate historical patterns of movement in the island. As a result, Jamaica lacked settlement legislation to control population movement, a practice which was specific to the island of Barbados due to its high population

²⁶ BNA CO 137/505/29 ‘Rules for the administration and regulation of the Poor.’

to land ratio. Historically, settlement laws confined Barbadians to the parishes in which they were born whenever they applied for relief from the government.²⁷ However, within the context of the English speaking Caribbean, many islands had variations of the same structure for the administration of poor relief but on a much more reduced scale. This was a result of their smaller size and population density.

By 1938, for example, the poor relief administration in St. Vincent was linked to the police force. The chief form of relief granted in the island was outdoor relief. The Chief of Police, based in the island capital of Kingstown, served as the ex-officio Chief Relieving Officer. Constables heading outstations acted as District Relieving Officers who were required to investigate each application for assistance before submitting their report to the central board in the island's capital. Poor relief boards in the districts reviewed the list of recipients every six months to issue recommendations for removal or renewed assistance. They also recommended new cases for relief in the island.²⁸ The Colonial administration maintained one Pauper Asylum, which was run by the Senior Medical Officer, to serve a population of over 57,000.²⁹ At the time of the Moyne Commission, the asylum housed 77 persons, most of whom were either very old

²⁷ Fletcher, "The Evolution of Poor Relief in Barbados" 188; see also Cecily Jones, *Engendering Whiteness: White Women and Colonialism in Barbados and North Carolina 1627 – 1865* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2007) especially chapter 1 which provides a discussion of poor relief as a form of social control of poor whites in Barbados in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

²⁸ BNA CO 950/368 'Memorandum on Outdoor Relief etc' by Major H. Grist, Chief Relieving Officer to the West India Royal Committee, October 28, 1938. Kingstown, St. Vincent.

²⁹ BNA CO 950/368 'Major H. Grist's testimony to the West India Royal Commission, Kingstown St. Vincent January 3, 1939.'

or very sick.³⁰ Another 562 men, women and children received outdoor relief from the state.³¹ In light of the limited reach of government assistance, institutions of informal relief dominated these communities. The most important of these was the extended family and the community.³² Limited access to economic opportunities, however, meant that many members of Caribbean societies migrated in search of economic opportunities so as to support family members left behind.

Much of the migratory movement experienced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred as the laboring population searched for better economic opportunities. Former slave societies were characterized as having large unskilled labor force. The long-term consequence of this was that in the face of economic depressions sugar economies were unable to absorb their significant, landless population. Events such as the Bountied Sugar Depression of the 1880s, which accompanied the opening of the British market to beet sugar, led to a significant decrease in international sugar prices. The downturn of the world economy during the Great Depression of the 1930s propelled labor demonstrations in Caribbean territories as wages stagnated/decreased and the cost of living increased. These global recessions helped to undermine Anglo-Caribbean sugar economies throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth

³⁰ BNA CO 950/368 'Major H. Grist to West India Royal Commission 'Witness Testimony.'

³¹ BNA CO 950/368 'Major H. Grist to the West India Royal Commission 'Memorandum on Outdoor Relief, St. Vincent.'

³² Dealt with in chapter 3.

centuries. In contrast, new economic opportunities in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Central and South America (especially Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Brazil) drew workers throughout the region. Recruiters from the Canal Zone obtained workers from Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and other islands to work in Panama.³³ Larger islands like Jamaica experienced large scale internal and external migration, a movement that influenced the class and gender of those persons who accessed poor relief. But Jamaica experienced considerable internal migration.

In the late nineteenth century, many workers left the western end of the island for the eastern part of Jamaica to work in the newly expanded banana and citrus industries. Drought and other natural disasters served to propel Jamaicans to move within and out of parishes. Personal issues such as the relocation of a family, access to health and educational facilities as well as illness also forced many persons to relocate from one parish to another. Economic concerns, however, underscored most of the movement in the island as persons moved from the sparsely populated mountainous interior to the densely populated coastline. Jamaicans also moved to the present day breadbasket parishes in the west and southwest (Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth and Manchester) where they engaged in

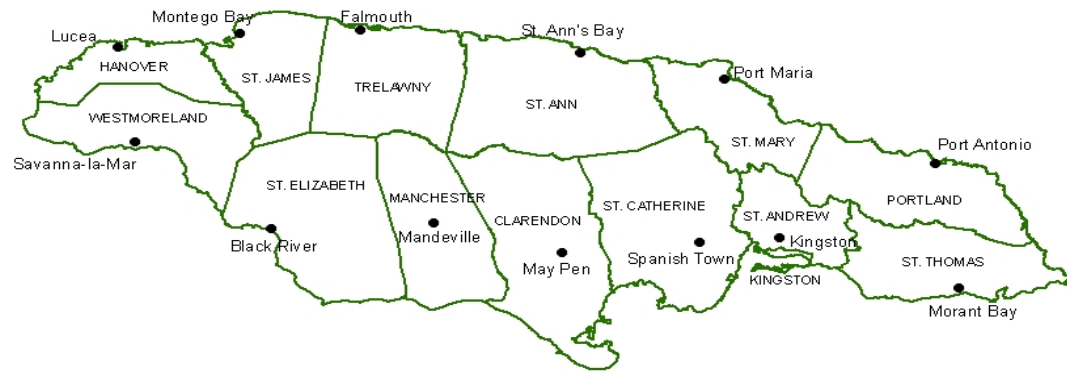
³³ Please see the following works for more information on regional migration: Annette Insanally, Mark Clifford and Sean Sheriff, (eds.), *Regional Footprints: The Travels and Travails of Early Caribbean Migrants* (Kingston: Latin American-Caribbean Centre, 2006); Bonham Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados 1900 – 1920* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985); Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama* (Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, 1987).

alternate forms of agricultural production such as pimento and ginger.³⁴ This movement reflected the changing economic opportunities available in the island. As the value and production of sugar decreased, persons changed their attention to banana and fruit production in search of alternate forms of income. Research by social scientists studying migratory movement in the island identified gendered dimensions of migration. Men dominated the external migration as well as seasonal labor movement especially in the banana areas, while women dominated internal rural to urban migration routes. This constant movement was facilitated by the increased access to transportation as well as the alleviating effect of external migration on population pressure in the 1920s.³⁵

³⁴ G.E. Cumper, 'Population Movements in Jamaica 1830 – 1950,' *Social and Economic Studies* Sept. 1956, 5: 3 (261 – 280) p. 272 – 274.

³⁵ Cumper, 273 – 274; See also H.D. Huggins and G.E. Cumper, 'Economic Development in a Context of Low Population Pressure,' *Social and Economic Studies* Sept. 1958, 7:3 (54 – 67) and G.W. Roberts *The Population of Jamaica* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1957).

Figure 1: Map of Jamaica Showing Parishes and Parish Capitals



The closure of external migration opportunities during the course of the Great Depression had several consequences for the Jamaican economy. The Great Depression triggered a general contraction of the Jamaican economy due to rising prices on essentials while wages either stagnated or declined as the employers attempted to cut the cost of production. Secondly, the return of repatriated Jamaicans from Cuba and the Dominican Republic as well as Central and South America swelled the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed in the island especially in the urban centers. Poor relief records for the interwar years show a steady increase in the number of persons requiring both in-door and out-door relief after 1930. The number of paupers increased from 7,713 in 1921 to 12,152

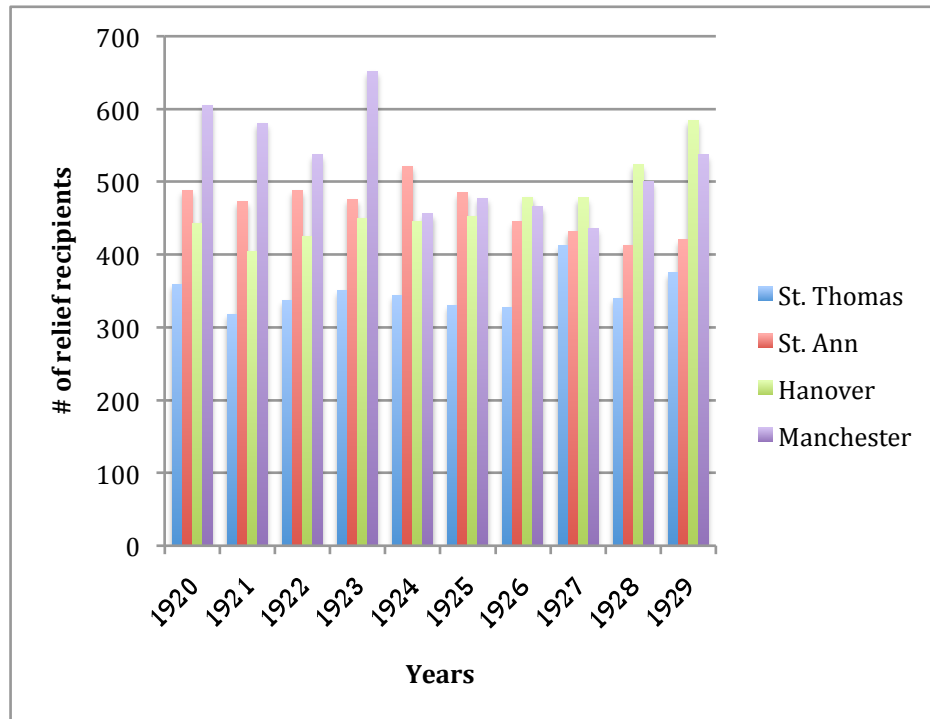
in 1938.³⁶ Over the same period the island's population grew from 862 625 to 1,173, 645. Thus while paupers constituted 8.9 percent of the population in 1921, by 1938 they represented 14.77 per cent. These figures provide some insight to the overall declining conditions of persons living in the island. If persons on poor relief were truly amongst the poorest in the island, then the steady increase in numbers and percentage, while not drastic, indicated that the quality of life of the average Jamaican was on a steady decline. It should also be noted that although there was an overall increase in numbers island-wide, some parishes intermittently experienced declines in pauper numbers throughout the period.

An assessment of poor relief records revealed significant differences amongst the parishes. Eastern parishes (St. Thomas, Portland, St. Mary) experienced some of the lowest demands for poor relief in the island for the entire period. Northern parishes (St. Ann, Trelawny and St. James) had a lower demand for assistance than southern parishes (Manchester, Clarendon and St. Catherine and Kingston & St. Andrew) but still higher than eastern parishes. Western parishes (Hanover, Westmoreland, and St. Elizabeth) received more applications for in-door and out-door relief than eastern and northern parishes but less than southern parishes. Using one parish from each region, the chart below (Chart 1)

³⁶ Board of Supervision, Report for the year ending 31st December 1921 in the *Departmental Reports for 1921* (Duke Street, Jamaica: Government Printer, 1922); Annual Report on the Social and Economic progress of the people of Jamaica for the year 1938 in the *Annual Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports* (Duke Street, Jamaica: Government Printer, 1939) p. 5.

presents a synopsis of poor relief demand between 1920 and 1929 to show the differences in demand for assistance. Kingston and St. Andrew (K.S.A.C) and St. Catherine are excluded because they were generally more developed than rural parishes, with Corporate Area (Kingston) being most developed in the island as the nation's capital.

Chart 1: Demand for Poor Relief in Four Parishes 1920 – 1929



Source: Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision 1921 to 1929 (Jamaica: Government Printing Office)

The variation of demand for assistance was tied to the economies of the parishes. The borders of rural St. Andrew, St. Thomas and Portland all meet in the Blue Mountains. As a result of their geographical location, these parishes experienced higher levels of rainfall, especially in the hilly areas, making them

less suited for sugar cane cultivation. Residents engaged in banana cultivation for export and local consumption in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The aforementioned parishes also had a lower population to land density, which in turn also meant a lower tax base from which to fund infrastructural projects and social services. Any real development in these parishes centered on the major coastal towns (mostly parish capitals) thereby forcing residents to travel long distances from communities to access social services. Migration to and from these parishes was mostly seasonal and male rather than family centered. The breakdown of established family structures through the death or absence of guardians and parents and extended family structure, tended to propel demand for relief in many parishes.

However, natural disasters along with fluctuating weather patterns in the region, such as flooding, droughts, hurricanes and crop failures tended to exacerbate poor living conditions. Hurricanes hit the island in 1909, 1912, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1923, 1929 and 1933. In fact two occurred in 1916 and three in 1933.³⁷ Heavy flooding occurred three times in 1933 and once in 1907, 1931 and 1937.³⁸ Such events often resulted in a drastic increase in relief expenditure as the government was forced to diversify the nature of the assistance provided to those in need. For example, in the early months of 1912, a drought hindered agricultural

³⁷ Erna Brodber, *The Second Generation of Freeman in Jamaica, 1907 – 1944* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004) 5.

³⁸ Brodber, 5.

production in eastern and southern parishes as well as Trelawny and St. Ann in the north and parts of St. Elizabeth in the southwest.³⁹ Then a hurricane struck the island in November that year. It destroyed 60 percent of the buildings as well as a large portion of permanent and peasant crop cultivations in the parishes of St. James, Hanover and Westmoreland. Heavy rains and flooding also submerged peasant cultivations in communities on the border of St. Ann and Clarendon. The island, therefore, experienced in 1912 an extensive shortage of ground provisions, which included several varieties of yams, potatoes and other starches all of which were and still an integral part of the Jamaican diet. Hurricane force winds destroyed homes and buildings while flooding contaminated drinking water and led to an increased risk of outbreaks of cholera and typhoid fever.

Assistance often took the form of housing for the homeless as well as seeds and plants to farmers during natural disasters.⁴⁰ This occurred alongside general in-door and out-door relief. The number of paupers receiving assistance increased from 6,467 in the 1911/12 financial years to 7,327 in 1912/13, as a result of the natural disasters that year.⁴¹ In 1933, the government appointed F.N. Isaacs, Secretary to the Board of Supervision (BS), as Hurricane Commissioner to oversee the dispensation of loans and general relief to those affected by the

³⁹ The Report of the Board of Supervision for the Year Ended 31st March 1913 *Annual Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1912 – 1913*, (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1914).

⁴⁰ Report of the Board of Supervision 1912 - 1913, p. 499.

⁴¹ Board of Supervision 1912 – 1913, p. 485.

natural disasters that year.⁴² The BS played an instrumental role in the mobilization and allocation of relief as natural disasters disrupted the economic stability in individual parishes as well as the island.

The economies of the northern, western, and southern parishes were more reliant on sugar-based cultivation and other economic activities historically associated with the plantation economy. Even though these parishes diversified their crop production they continuously lost their laboring population to internal and external migration. Parishes such as St. Elizabeth and Clarendon, also heavily dependent on sugar cultivation, experienced high fertility rates as well as high population to land densities. They lost population not only to Kingston and St. Andrew but also neighboring parishes. These parishes lacked significant infrastructural development despite their higher population and tax base.

Uneven distribution of social services and infrastructural development throughout the island also served to exacerbate poor living conditions in the island. Many persons hoped to move to Kingston, which was both the administrative and commercial capital of the island. Kingston's wealth and growth eclipsed that of Spanish Town (capital of St. Catherine), and the administrative centre was moved to Kingston in 1872. Kingston shared a great deal of the administration of its poor relief and social services with the St.

⁴² Report of the Board of Supervision for the year ended 31st December 1933 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Report for 1933* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment, 1934), p. 357.

Andrew Parochial Board by establishing the only Union Poor House in the island in the 1880s. In 1923, the administrative functions of both parishes were officially amalgamated into the newly constituted Kingston and St. Andrew Cooperation (K.S.A.C).

Petitioners from the parish of St. Andrew, lobbying against the amalgamation of the two parishes, argued that the parishes were so economically and geographically dissimilar that the demands and needs of the smaller parish of Kingston would overshadow that of St. Andrew. They contended that St. Andrew was a sparsely populated parish of 54,578 persons occupying 183 square miles of mostly rural hill country with villages running as high as 5000 ft. above sea level and as far as twenty miles from Kingston. Only the plain of Liguanea, which contained villages, townships and public markets, was adjacent to the city and parish of Kingston. Taxes along with productive assets such as markets, shops and a slaughterhouse covered the parochial board debt of £9,000. Most of its residents engaged in pastoral and agricultural activities. In contrast, the city and parish of Kingston was an entirely urban community, which occupied 5 1/2 square miles on the seacoast, and a crowded population of 62,707.⁴³ The Kingston City Council was in over £60,000 in debt and lacked productive assets to supplement taxes. Merging both parishes provided the residents of Kingston with access to the

⁴³ Jamaica has fourteen parishes including Kingston. However, in 1923, the government decided to abolish Kingston City Council, which acted as a parochial board, along with the St. Andrew Parochial Board and merge the administrative functions of both parishes by creating the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation.

productive assets of the parish of St. Andrew as well as significantly greater financial, natural and human resources. This merger, however, increased voter qualifications from that of ten shilling to £6 and required annual enrolment to the property roll.

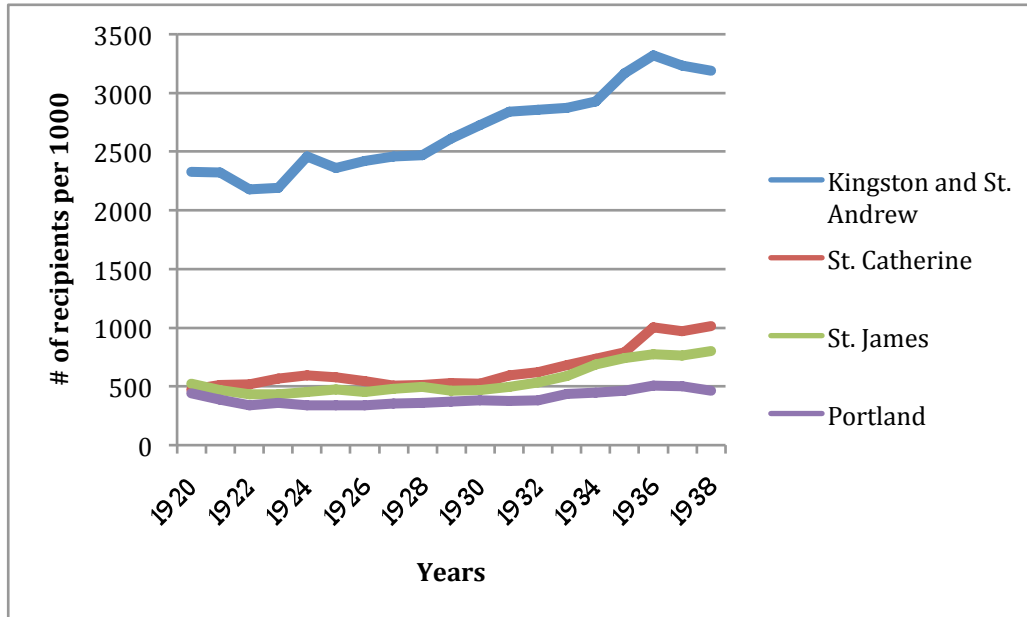
Such changes alienated small farmers and pastoralists living in rural St. Andrew from the nomination process, thereby providing no guarantee that they would benefit from any future infrastructural and communication projects.⁴⁴ Despite these concerns, the K.S.AC administered a total area of 190 $\frac{3}{4}$ sq. miles with a population of 144,681 by 1938.⁴⁵ By the early 20th century, Kingston and the adjoining areas of St. Andrew (namely Liguanea) had their own piped water supply from a reservoir, while in rural St. Andrew along with other parishes, water was drawn from rivers, aquifers and 'stand-pipes' at the entrance of various communities and districts. Residents in Kingston and suburban St. Andrew also had access to other facilities such as a public hospital, the lunatic asylum (the only one in the island) as well as crèche's, clinics and numerous other facilities. Poor roads and communication made it difficult for residents in rural St. Andrew to access these facilities. Nonetheless, this difference in infrastructural development

⁴⁴ BNA CO 137/761, Petitioners of the Parochial Board of St. Andrew to the Duke of Devonshire, London 17th November 1922. Enclosed in correspondence 'Hon. L. Probyn, Governor of Jamaica to the Duke of Devonshire, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22nd November 1922;' The Annual Report of Jamaica of 1938 lists the size of Kingston as being 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ sq. miles.

⁴⁵ Figures taken from the Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Jamaica for the year 1932 in the *Annual Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports* (Duke St., Jamaica: Government Printer, 1933) p. 1 and Report of the Board of Supervision, 1938 p. 108.

meant that the Corporate Area bore the brunt of the financial burden in relation to the care of persons in need of financial assistance.

Chart 2: Distribution of Poor Relief in Four Parishes 1920 – 1938



Source: Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision 1920 – 1938 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports 1920 – 1938* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment)

Chart 2 provides a visual comparative analysis of the growth of poor relief distribution in Kingston and St. Andrew along with the three rural parishes of St. Catherine (south), St. James (north) and Portland (east). The figures reveal that the number of persons receiving in-door and out-door relief from Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (K.S.A.C) grew from 2,329 in 1920 to 2,727 in 1930 and

increased every year until it hit 3,187 in 1938.⁴⁶ This stands in stark contrast to the other thirteen parishes, with the exception of St. Catherine, which had less than 1,000 relief recipients during the last years of the interwar period. The situation in Kingston was further complicated by the constant influx of migrants into the area. Kingston, still a residential area despite its administrative and commercial function, received 3,800 males and 6,500 females mainly from the parishes of St. Catherine, Manchester, St. Ann and St. Elizabeth.⁴⁷ Furthermore, for the period 1911 – 1943, St. Andrew was the only parish not to lose population to Kingston thereby signifying the administrative and commercial ties that linked the parishes closely together. In fact, St. Andrew received an estimated 2,700 female and 1,500 male migrants from all parishes except St. Thomas and Portland.⁴⁸ Clarendon, St. Catherine, Manchester, and St. Elizabeth accounted for 53% of persons migrating into St. Andrew. A clear indication that migration served to exacerbate poor socio-economic conditions in the Corporate area was shown by the fact that a key charge to out-door relief for the K.S.A.C Pauper Committee was to provide monies for the return of migrants to their home parishes.

While these statistics fail to reveal the racial composition of internal migration, they reinforce the fact that women of the laboring classes dominated

⁴⁶ The figures from 1920 to 1922 combine Kingston, St. Andrew and Port Royal prior to the creation of the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation in 1923.

⁴⁷ Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica*, 149.

⁴⁸ Roberts, 149.

internal rather than external migration. Such mobility strengthened the idea among the elite and government officials that the laboring class family unit was inherently unstable. Poor relief figures also failed to include those women who existed on the margins of extreme poverty but could not qualify for relief because they were able-bodied and childless. Nonetheless, the prevalence of women/female guardians and their children on outdoor relief not only feminized notions of poverty but also signaled to officials the existence of a greater social problem. Anglo-colonial society believed that the family was the foundation of civilized society and that mothers were instrumental in creating good colonial citizens. Officials such as Edith Clarke believed that the prevalence of women and their children on the rolls reflected a general decline of economic opportunity as well as the lack of reciprocal responsibility among parents to provide for their children.⁴⁹ To support her argument she referenced the following example in her testimony to the West India Commission:

‘In one month we had 31 applications from one parish, of which 29 were for women who had been granted relief on account of the children. These 29 women had 97 children between them and none of these children were receiving any contribution from a father.’⁵⁰

Incidents such as the aforementioned quote intensified negative stereotypes, among the elite, about the amorality of the laboring classes and the instability of

⁴⁹ BNA CO 950/137, Memorandum on Social Conditions prepared by order of the Honorable Colonial Secretary for the Information of the West India Royal Commission by Edith Clarke, Secretary of the Board of Supervision.

⁵⁰ BNA CO 950/137, ‘Edith Clarke’s testimony to the West India Royal Commission.’

their family units. Miss Clarke believed that the existing structure of relief could not continue to maintain single parent family units unless efforts were made to improve the quality of life of the average Jamaican. Until then many of these women and/or their children would repeatedly rely on the colonial state for assistance.

Yearly reports by the Board of Supervision revealed the financial inefficiency of the existing poor relief administration. The Board reported that expenditure between 1936 and 1937 increased rapidly from £98,039 to £110,425.⁵¹ During that year all but four parishes experienced significant increases in expenditure. The cost of poor relief administration had increased to astronomical levels to the point of consuming an extensive portion of Parochial Board expenditure of all parishes. Poor relief consumed 66%, 55% and 50% of the parochial board revenue for the parishes of St. Elizabeth, Hanover and K.S.A.C respectively. The report further stated that since the inception of the Board in 1887, poor relief expenditure had trebled and the number of paupers per 1000 had increased from 7.3% (6,707) in 1887 to 13.77% (15,474) in 1937. It considered 'that the arrangements for poor relief [were] cumbersome and expensive from an administrative point of view; and in practice [could] only cause

⁵¹ Board of Supervision, Report for the year ending 31st December 1937 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports, 1937* (Duke Street: Government Printer, 1938) p. 173.

hardship and inconvenience.’⁵² The Board also concluded that parochial boards exhibited a general indifference to changing the system because any such change would have required collaborations with contiguous parishes and the reorienting of facilities away from parish urban centers to rural communities to provide increased access to those in need. In the short term, such a huge project demanded financial buoyancy and willing participants to volunteer their time – both of which the Jamaican government lacked or was unwilling to provide.

The Board identified several of the underlying causes of pauperism in the island. Physically disabling diseases such as yaws, ulcers and syphilis were identified as the leading causes. Many persons failed to treat these diseases in their early stages due to the inadequate access to medical services and dispensaries available, especially to the large rural laboring population. Other factors included the lack of provision for old age, inadequate familial support, as well as the high rate of illegitimacy amongst the laboring population. The Board also identified the “irresponsibility” of male parents whose reported failure to honor their role as the ‘breadwinner’ in the family structure contributed significantly to pauperism amongst women and children. Last of all, the general failure to provide adequate educational and medical facilities to children, especially those in residential schools and homes, eventually failed to produce self-sufficient adults. They, too, would eventually contribute to the problem of

⁵² Board of Supervision, 1937, p. 171.

pauperism in the long term. Issues of illegitimacy and children in poor relief will be dealt with in Chapter 3. For the moment, however, it is important to note that among the laboring classes, the breakdown of family structure especially that of the extended family, was identified as one of the major causes for the increase in the number of children applying for relief, especially in the 1930s.

Another major consequence of internal migration was the changing socio-economic and infrastructural landscape of Kingston and St. Andrew. Kingston lost its residential population to the parish of St. Andrew between 1921 and 1943. This movement, however, was simultaneously a class shift as well as urban to rural movement. The merchant classes moved from Kingston to St. Andrew in the face of the expanding squatter communities and slum settlements which encroached upon the city. Despite the fact that the population gains to Kingston were less than half of that experienced by St. Andrew, the latter (especially Liguanea and present day Constant Spring) became more suburban-esque with less instances of dilapidated housing, while Kingston remained a commercial port centre with dilapidated housing and squatter settlements on the periphery of the city.⁵³ Many of these poverty-stricken communities housed the skilled and unskilled, non-agricultural, and illiterate population that included domestics, laundresses, market women, dockworkers, carpenters and masons as well as the

⁵³ Roberts, 154; See also Brian Moore and Michele Johnson, (eds), *'Squalid Kingston' 1890 – 1920: How the Poor Lived, Moved and Had Their Being* (Mona, Jamaica: Department of History Social History Project, 2000). This includes a series of newspaper editorials describing living conditions in Kingston in the tenement yards and slum housing.

general unemployed and underemployed. By 1938, a disproportionate number of these persons participated extensively in the labor demonstrations that occurred in that year and later formed the great majority of participants in the trade union movement that evolved during the 1940s and 1950s.

Poor Relief in Jamaica 1919 - 1938

After a number of regional wide disturbances between 1932 and 1938, in preparation for the arrival of the Moyne Commission in 1938 – 1939, the Secretary of State for the Colonies sent out a series of detailed questionnaires that focused on various aspects of the social service provisions in the different islands. The questionnaire identified the following areas as key parts of social welfare: health, education, women's welfare, child welfare, housing, prisons, juvenile organizations as well as philanthropic and recreational facilities. The responses of the Jamaican colonial government revealed that the poor relief administration incorporated and relied heavily on the island's education, health, and prisons infrastructure.

The testimony of Edith Clarke, as Secretary to the Board of Supervision, to the Moyne Commission in 1938 clearly reflected the complexities of the social welfare system in Jamaica.⁵⁴ She testified that 'destitution alone was not a

⁵⁴ Edith Clarke, a trained anthropologist and author of the book, *My Mother who Fathered Me*, was appointed acting Secretary to the Board of Supervision in February 1936. This post gave her an intimate knowledge of the workings of the poor relief system in Jamaica as well as the general

qualification for poor relief.... Applicants must also [suffer] from physical and mental causes, unable to work and earn a means of sustenance”⁵⁵ The only exceptions to this rule were women who had young children and no one to support them.⁵⁶ However, their situation did not necessarily guarantee assistance, as became evident in the case of a widow who in 1921 applied to the Inspector of Poor, Kingston and St. Andrew, for help for herself and her five children, all under the age of eleven years. Since its inception in 1886, the Board of Supervision had considered with great regularity cases of women with children whose fathers had left the island, could not be traced, or, having been assumed dead, had consequently left the burden of support and care on the mother. The Law officers of the Crown decided that these mothers were not entitled to poor relief because they ‘were healthy and capable of earning the means of subsistence and were not “wholly destitute” within the meaning of the law.’⁵⁷

In response to this ruling, the Board of Supervision sent out a memorandum to the parochial boards suggesting an amendment to the 1886 legislation to make provision for such women, more specifically the widow with five children. Eight of the fourteen parochial boards wholly or theoretically

conditions of the working class during this period. Edith Clarke continued to be an active participant officially and otherwise in the poor relief administration and social welfare until the late 1960s.

⁵⁵ BNA CO 950/137, West India Royal Commission, Eighth Session held Nov. 10, 1938.

⁵⁶ BNA CO 950/137, West India Royal Commission, Eighth Session held Nov. 10, 1938; Jamaica Archives (JA) 1B/5/75/120 Minute Paper ‘Summary of replies from Parochial Boards to CSO Circular 19442/21 dated Dec. 1, 1921.

⁵⁷ JA 1B/5/75/120 “Extract from the Annual Report of the Board of Supervision.”

agreed with the proposed change to the legislation. However, the St. Thomas and St. Catherine Parochial Boards advocated the separation of the mother from the children, who would then be placed in either the Maxfield Park Children's Home in Kingston or the Rio Cobre Children's Home in the parish of St. Catherine.⁵⁸ This general unwillingness of the local government as well as the state apparatus to place persons perceived as able bodied on temporary relief apparently occurred for one main reason. Heavily indebted at this time, the Jamaican state was unable to provide this social service without significantly increasing the burden of taxation on wage earners in the society. Negotiating this socio-economic arrangement, in which the central and local governments accepted responsibility to care for the less fortunate in the society, created a hierarchy of poverty.

One's ability to prove disability or destitution through tangible reflections of poverty – sickness, starvation as well as physical and mental disabilities - took precedence over those for whom assistance would prevent them from falling into the valley of destitution. 'Ablebodied-ness', therefore, became the curse of the persons seeking temporary relief. This tiered system of destitution placed the able-bodied at the bottom of the poverty ladder, thereby making them less likely to access assistance until they became so destitute that they were unable to fend for themselves. In this case, members of the parochial boards of St. Thomas and St. Catherine preferred to dismantle the widows' family rather than approve

⁵⁸ JA 1B/5/75/120 Minute Paper 'Summary of replies from Parochial Boards to CSO Circular 19442/21 dated Dec. 1, 1921.'

temporary assistance to alleviate their existing economic hardship. More importantly, this hierarchical construction of poverty resulted in a patchwork approach to the alleviation of economic destitution in the island.

In the early years of the poor relief administration, it was found that in times of economic hardship many persons on the pauper roll engaged in alternate economic activities to supplement their receipts from the weekly dole. By the twentieth century, however, it had become common practice to remove persons from the roll on the basis that they had employment or were well enough to work. For example at a meeting of the Pauper Committee Meeting, Kingston, of December 17, 1924, it was decided that required Sarah Ann Roy should give up her still, an apparatus for distilling alcoholic beverages, to the Corporation before reinstating her to the Pauper Roll. Of course this requirement could be viewed as an economic necessity due to the fact that the Pauper Fund could only cover a small segment of the population. By 1938, widespread poverty and economic disenfranchisement meant that only the most destitute, depending on the Inspector of Poor's interpretation, could qualify for financial or medical assistance. Limiting funding, however, did not negate the fact that most members of the Jamaican population were in desperate straits. The reality was that more destitute persons existed outside rather than within the poor relief administration.

The inability, therefore, of the government to provide the basic administrative machinery that coordinated and maintained proper statistical data

as well as conduct comparative analysis across multiple government departments hindered a systematic approach to problem solving. Poor relief, therefore, limped through the early twentieth century, hindered by underfunding, burdened by bureaucracy and interdepartmental conflict and sinking under the weight of ever-increasing applications for temporary and permanent assistance. Hence Edith Clarke's forcefully adopted position to the members of the Commission that 'the effect of economic conditions [wa]s such that the Poor Relief ha[d] grown beyond the machinery existing to handle it.'⁵⁹

Medical Relief

The Jamaican health system included one maternity and one public hospital serving the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew. A public health nursing unit in Kingston catered to those individuals who were unable to access institutional medical care. An additional twelve public hospitals as well as a parochial midwifery service catered to each of the remaining thirteen parishes. The public nursing service worked with the tuberculosis and venereal disease clinics, schools, district work and infant welfare in Kingston and St. Andrew, while the parochial midwifery service doubled as a district nursing service in the other parishes.⁶⁰ One lunatic asylum (Bellvue) and maternity hospital (Jubilee),

⁵⁹ BNA CO 950/137, 'Witness Testimony of Edith Clarke to the Moyne Commission.'

⁶⁰ BNA CO 950/137, 'West India Royal Commission Questionnaire on certain matters pertaining to Social welfare' Annexe #1 pages 8 – 10.

both of which were housed in Kingston, catered to the entire island. Almshouses, also known as Poor Houses, were a key part of the indoor relief process and doubled as housing for those who fell outside of the boundaries of the island medical service. Persons often came to or were sent to the poor house to live out their final days or to make room for someone else at the Public Hospital.⁶¹ For example, in April of 1920 the St. Mary Poor House, located in the parish capital of Port Maria, received inmates from Annotto Bay Hospital due to the unavailability of beds at the hospital.⁶² In another case, the Committee of the Corporation Poor House (CPH) in April of 1928 received a letter from the Senior Medical Officer at Jubilee Hospital in stating that he could no longer approve transfers of maternity cases from the CPH to Jubilee because the institution was ‘taxed to its utmost capacity and [wa]s recommending that a supply of instruments for use in maternity cases be obtained by the Poor House.’⁶³ It is clear that the island’s medical infrastructure failed to meet the needs of the Jamaican community. As a result it was important for the government to find ways to supplement the medical services.

Medical assistance was one of the most important alternative forms of relief provided by the Poor Relief administration. Many persons attached to the

⁶¹ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), ‘Minutes and Report of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, Jamaica, April 27 1928.’

⁶² JA 2/16/59 (1896 – 1925), ‘Minutes of the Poor House Committee, Port Maria, St. Mary, April 1, 1920.’

⁶³ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), ‘Minutes and Report of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, Jamaica April 27, 1928.’

medical and poor relief systems felt that existing healthcare structures available to laboring class Jamaicans were inadequate. As a result, persons who were unable to access healthcare in the nineteenth century could receive a medical ticket by applying to their respective Parochial Boards. This practice continued into the twentieth century, with persons applying for assistance through their local Inspector of Poor. Many of these persons included pregnant women who were unable to afford or access the services of a midwife and persons suffering from tuberculosis and other contagious diseases. In other instances, applicants received a pair of glasses, a wooden leg, crutches, clothes or shoes as an alternative form of relief. For example, Jane Knowles of 2A Maiden Lane in Kingston received ‘nourishment for 4 weeks’ at the request of the Inspector of Poor for Kingston.⁶⁴ Amputations and other minor medical procedures were performed at parishes that had poor houses, as in the case of S. Chaffe in the St. Mary Poor House whose leg was to be amputated by the District Medical Officer (DMO).⁶⁵ Other individuals requested financial assistance with transportation when their homes were located in another parish. This was the case as it related to registered pauper Mary

⁶⁴ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1925), ‘Minutes and Record of the Pauper Committee, Union Poor House, Kingston, October 15, 1924.’

⁶⁵ JA 2/16/59 (1896 – 1925), ‘Minutes of the Poor House Committee, Port Maria, St. Mary, May 1, 1920.’

Ferguson who was granted assistance by the Pauper Committee of Kingston to return to the parish of St. Mary.⁶⁶

Sometimes, as in the case with Esther Gunn, an inmate in the St. Mary Poor House who had a brother in the parish of Clarendon, inmates were released from poor houses to live with family members.⁶⁷ The lack of settlement legislation made it possible for authorities to send relief recipients across districts within parishes as well as across parish lines, thereby transferring the responsibility of relief to another district or parochial board. Other persons accessed relief to alleviate the cost of burials. Quite a few Jamaicans received ‘breadfruit box’ coffins or ‘pauper burials’ through their Parochial Boards. Most of the councils maintained contracts with carpenters and masons to fulfill such needs as requested. Parochial midwives and nurses intervened in the inadequate healthcare system by providing necessary assistance to many of those who were unable to leave their homes to visit the dispensary, hospitals or doctors. While they undoubtedly performed a much-needed service, unfortunately these women became most visible in the records when they failed to fulfill their obligations to their patients.

Evidence to support this point of view became apparent between February and July 1936 when the Pauper Committee of K.S.A.C appointed a sub-

⁶⁶ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1925), ‘Minutes and Record of the Pauper Committee, Union Poor House, Kingston, November 5, 1924.’

⁶⁷ JA 2/16/59 (1896 – 1925), ‘Minutes of the Poor House Committee, Port Maria, St. Mary, December 23, 1920.’

Committee to enquire into the conduct of Nurse Kathleen Mills, a Parochial Midwife. In February 25, 1936, Nurse Mills helped deliver twins to first time mother Mavis Bramwell of Smith's Lane, Kingston. Upon her arrival, Mills found Mrs. Bramwell in mid labor, very weak, with a temperature of 104 degrees. She had ulcerations on her buttocks and other parts of her body and lived in general squalor. Nonetheless, the twin boys successfully entered the world alive. However, once Nurse Mills left Mrs. Bramwell on the 25th she never returned. Subsequently the first child died on the 26th, the second twin died on the 27th and the mother, Mavis Bramwell, was admitted to Jubilee Hospital on her 5th puerperal day (3rd March) 'in the most neglected condition.' She finally died two days after admission.⁶⁸

In her defense, Nurse Mills argued that because the room in which Mrs. Bramwell lived was very "offensive," she was afraid that through contact with her she might become contagious and infect other patients.⁶⁹ As a temporary solution, Mills contacted Inspector of Poor (IP) for Kingston, Mr. Ferguson, suggesting that Mrs. Bramwell be admitted to the Corporation Poor House (CPH) for medical care. She then posited that Mr. Ferguson, the IP for Kingston and St, Andrew, informed her that members of the community impeded him from having Mrs.

⁶⁸ JA 2/6/174, 'Extract from the minute of M.S. Lewis, Matron of Jubilee Hospital. Minutes and Report of the Meeting of the Sub-Committee appointed to Enquire into the Conduct of Nurse K. Mills, Parochial Midwife on Tuesday 28 July 1936.'

⁶⁹ JA 2/6/174, 'Testimony of Kathleen Mills (taken by Oswald Anderson with witnesses E. DePass and R.M. Wade).'

Bramwell taken to the poor house. Inspector Ferguson, however, denied receiving a request from Nurse Mills to have Mrs. Bramwell admitted to the Corporation Poor House. Rather, he claimed to have received burial requests for baby boys shortly after their deaths. He claimed that neither the father nor Nurse Mills had informed him that the mother was desperately ill. Furthermore, he declared that it was the responsibility of parochial nurses to contact the District Medical Officer (DMO) in dire situations so as to facilitate admissions to the Public Hospital or Jubilee Maternity Hospital.

The disagreement between the Parochial Nurse and the Inspector of Poor revealed the difficulties in communication among the various local government departments. Parochial Boards controlled pauper committees and housed the midwifery service. But the latter was also linked to the Island Medical Service and was, therefore, instrumental in the public health infrastructure in terms of connecting poor Jamaicans with the District Medical Officer and other medical officials. Parochial nurses were thus bound to the rules of the Island Medical Office as well as those of the Parochial Board. Testimonies, therefore, against Nurse Mills came from the Head Matron at Jubilee and the Senior Medical Officer attached to the hospital, thus showing the interconnectivity among these institutions. In addition, Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors of Poor (IP) answered to both the Parochial Board and the Board of Supervision. In fact, only the Board of Supervision could fire a derelict Inspector or Assistant Inspector of Poor, a

situation that caused multiple conflicts between Parochial Boards and the Board of Supervision. On the ground, however, IPs and Parochial midwives were forced to navigate complex bureaucratic rules, regulations and power hierarchies as seen in the aforementioned example. Unfortunately for Nurse Mills, once the sub-committee members completed their investigation they found her guilty of dereliction of her duties. Because of her years of service to the Parochial Board, they accordingly recommended to the Parochial Board (KSAC) that she be suspended for only two months.

Nonetheless, these nurses played an instrumental role not only through their work in the parochial nursing service, but also by attempting to provide sufficient quality of health care in the almshouses. By the mid-1930s, the Board of Supervision instructed parochial boards that Matrons of Poorhouses should have nursing certification so as to provide assistance to the other medical officials on staff including the dispenser, the night nurses, visiting doctors and other medical officials. Although Masters of the Poor House were not required to have similar training, such skills were welcome. However, in 1936 it was found that only one Master and Matron were certified as a dispenser and general nurse in ten out of thirteen almshouses. No almshouse in the island employed certified nurses to work alongside Masters and Matrons.⁷⁰ This requirement of medical practitioners in the Poor Relief system highlighted the centrality of poor relief

⁷⁰ *Report of the Committee on Poor Relief and the Management of Poor Houses in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Government Printing Press 1938) 4.

institutions, such as the almshouse (poor house), in expanding the accessibility of medical and other social services to the average Jamaican.

Almshouses in Jamaica

‘It is clear that the almshouses are primarily infirmaries for sick persons, but the fact does not appear to be generally recognised’⁷¹

The Board of Supervision determined in 1936 that no able-bodied persons should receive relief especially in the almshouses. Persons staying or being treated in almshouses were defined as being either chronically sick with no chance of recovery or temporarily sick. The aged and infirm fell into the same category as the chronically sick and very often came to the poor house to live out their final days. The temporarily sick, however, were very often laborers who fell ill and were in need of institutional care. More often than not women were forced to bring their children to the almshouse because they had nowhere else to stay. The situation was so bad that throughout the interwar period, almshouses in Jamaica suffered from overcrowding, poor sanitation and diet as well as inadequate housing facilities. A 1936 report investigating Poor Relief and the Management of Poor Houses in Jamaica estimated that thirteen almshouses provided accommodation for approximately 1600 persons of varying degrees of health throughout the island. All of these institutions, with the exception of the

⁷¹ Board of Supervision, Report for the year ending 31st December, 1936 in *Annual General Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports, 1936* (Duke Street, Jamaica: Government Printer, 1937) p. 478.

Trelawny almshouse, were filled passed capacity with many experiencing spikes in the month of November. Table One below breaks down overcrowding in almshouses for 1936.⁷²

⁷² *Report of the Committee on Poor Relief*, 3.

Table 1: The Capacity of Almshouses versus the Actual Number of Inmates Housed in Almshouses in 1936

<i>Almshouses</i>	<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Max. No. during 1936</i>	<i>Daily Avg. for 1936</i>	<i>Monthly Avg. for last 9 months</i>
St. Thomas	80	96 (Sept)	82	88.4
Portland	130	135 (Apr)	130.38	129.6
St. Mary	130	208 (Dec)	199.153	197.3
St. Ann	110	128 (July)	125.25	124.7
Trelawny	60	58 (Nov)	56	54.2
St. James	92	145 (Nov)	140	135
Hanover	60	77 (Aug)	69	67.8
Westmoreland	76	97 (Nov)	78	80.8
St. Elizabeth	100	152 (Oct)	137	141.4
Manchester	70	76 (Apr)	72	73.2
Clarendon	100	119 (Nov)	112.51	115.1
St. Catherine	168	238 (Sept)	221.02	217.8
K.S.A.C	500	840 (Dec)	787.3	815.5

Source: Report of the Committee on Poor Relief and the Management of Poor Houses in Jamaica

The Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation almshouse suffered from the greatest overcrowding. The almshouse was built to accommodate 500 inmates yet in 1936 it housed a daily average of over 700 persons. Most persons admitted to

almshouses suffered from incurable illnesses, general poor health or extreme destitution. The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the condition of admits to poor houses throughout the island between 1930 and 1934.⁷³

Table 2: The Classification of Inmates Admitted to Poor Houses in the Island between 1930 and 1934.

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Total Admissions</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
Destitution only	3,761	28.4
Chronic Incurable Diseases	2,117	15.84
Syphilis	3,925	29.37
Tuberculosis	1,665	12.45
Mental Disease	254	1.90
Pellagra	70	.52
Hookworm	1,143	8.55
Malaria	382	2.85
Fits	46	.34

Source: Report of the Committee on Poor Relief and the Management of Poor houses

Overcrowding in almshouses occurred as a result of inadequate hospital facilities throughout the island. Masters and Matrons of Poor Houses could not deny entry to any sick or destitute person applying for admission. In the absence of a Children's Hospital as well as a Special Home for the mentally and physically disabled, poor houses served not only as infirmaries but also as

⁷³ *Report of the Committee on Poor Relief*, 3.

resident home for those without family support. Every year, during inspections of almshouses, the Board of Supervision complained of inadequate sanitary facilities for men and women, the absence of well-trained staff, poorly maintained TB and maternity wards, poorly kept records and the refusal of Parochial Boards to adopt diet regulations and attend meetings associated with the management of poorhouse committees. General resistance to making proper arrangements for those persons with infectious diseases and the temporary sick meant that some persons were admitted to almshouses on a temporary basis only to never return to their families. One example of the poor conditions in which inmates in almshouses lived was revealed on a visit to the St. Elizabeth Almshouse in 1936:

‘some inmates lying on mats on the floor; one of these was a very old immaciated man, another a child of 5 years with ulcers on the buttocks and spine...There was a separate room for TB cases. It contained an infant and a young woman about 19 years. The infant was lying on a heap of dirty rags in a wooden crib with no mattress. There are 4 female nurses...they have no qualifications and 2 are illiterate. The so-called night nurse is an old inmate...’⁷⁴

Many Parochial Boards often found the cost of providing qualified and competent staff members to almshouses as being excessive. As a result, they employed persons who were often indistinguishable from inmates in terms of their dress, education and standard of living.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ JA 1B/5/77/57 (1936), ‘Edith Clarke, Acting Secretary, Board of Supervision to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston, April 6, 1936.’ The correspondence includes a copy of the report on the inspection of the St. Elizabeth Poor House.

⁷⁵ Board of Supervision, 1937 p. 172.

In rural areas, doctors visited the almshouse once a week unless sent for by the Master or Matron of the institution. The Corporation Poor House, which had an average of 846.43 inmates in 1937, then had only one part-time medical officer. In two of the twelve rural almshouses, the matron was not a certified nurse. It was found that in one almshouse no bed sheets were provided, while in another there were no bedpans for chronic, bedridden patients. The mattresses were removed and the inmates left on the ground or wooden trestles.⁷⁶

By the mid twentieth century, most parish almshouses, therefore, served multiple functions including a house of refuge for the aged and a hospital for the sick. Among the sick would be persons suffering from tuberculosis, influenza, malaria, hookworm, venereal disease, pregnant women and children with ulcers and fevers. They also served as a housing center for mentally ill adults and juveniles as well as crippled children. Kingston pauper rolls revealed that persons were often sent from the Salvation Army, the Public Hospital, the Night Shelter and the Prison system to the Union Poor House (also the Corporate Poor House after 1923) throughout the 1920s and 30s. For example, Louise Wallace was taken off the streets and sent to the Corporation Poor House in December of 1924.⁷⁷ Many Jamaicans, therefore, considered almshouses among the most unsanitary

⁷⁶ Board of Supervision, 1936 p. 478.

⁷⁷ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1925), ‘Minutes and Report of the Pauper Committee, Union Poor House, Kingston, December 10, 1924.’ No further information has been found on Ms. Louise Wallace.

institutions in which one could be housed and many refused to enter willingly despite ill health and desperate financial circumstances.

The centrality of the poor house as a signifier of social alienation and extreme destitution is reflected in the ubiquitous use of ‘almshouse’ in the Jamaican cultural consciousness. The government often devised ways to recover from inmates the cost of their upkeep. Parochial Boards and the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation seized and auctioned family properties and other assets to recoup the cost of maintenance. During periods of illness other inmates lost their tools of trade to auctions in order to receive food, shelter, and medical care from the almshouses, thereby leaving them with no means of sustenance after they have recuperated. As a result of these practices, within the Jamaican dialect the colloquial use of the term ‘almshouse’ could refer to any situation in which persons were temporarily or systematically relieved of their possessions/assets, subjected to or exposed to ridicule and embarrassment or engaged in an activity that resulted in the subjection of an individual to the aforementioned activities. The phrase “...ah *almshouse* ting dat” continues to pervade the Jamaican psyche today despite the fact that former Almshouses/Poor Houses are now called Parish Infirmaries. Admittance to these institutions is still perceived as a reflection of one’s inability to maintain economic independence or a general failure to retain familial and community networks, both of which are believed to have been instrumental in determining an individual’s existence. An individual’s admittance

to an almshouse/poorhouse/infirmary became synonymous with the loss of dignity throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Many Jamaicans perceived poor houses as being a hospice for those in the final stages of life and very often refused to accept in-door relief. The Medical Officer, for example, reported that the Corporation Poor House had a high death rate on account of people waiting until they were in the last stages of life before coming into the Institution. Sometimes eight or ten inmates died at a time within days of their arrival.⁷⁸ For example, of the ninety-six persons 'discharged' in the month of February 1928, thirty-eight had died. This stands in comparison with the St. Mary Poor House (SMPH) for a similar period, which had no deaths.⁷⁹

Poor houses also served as a temporary and, in most cases, permanent refuge for the mentally unstable until they could either be transferred to the Lunatic Asylum or until they died. In correspondence minuted to the Board of Supervision as well as the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, the Medical Officer for the Lunatic Asylum complained that inmates admitted from the CPH showed evidence of neglect as they were "invariably in a poor and dirty condition, dirty heads and sores on the body in some cases."⁸⁰ As a result,

⁷⁸ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), 'Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, April 27, 1928.'

⁷⁹ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), 'Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, May 23, 1928.'

⁸⁰ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), 'Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, July 25, 1928.'

factors such as overcrowding and poor medical and sanitary facilities made the almshouse an unpleasant place to reside.

The accommodation of children also was an area of concern for Poor Relief Officials. Parishes such as St Mary, St. Elizabeth and Manchester as well as the KSAC had Children's Homes facilities to which they could send children. In the case of Kingston, the Poor House committee managed both the Union Poor House and the Maxfield Park Children's Home. Those parishes that lacked Children Home facilities placed young children in poor houses. Many children accompanied their parents, grandparents or guardians into the poor house, were born there, were placed in workhouses or were on waiting lists to be boarded out or admitted to resident homes and facilities in St. James, Manchester, St. Mary or Kingston. Housing children in almshouses occurred with great regularity despite the rules and provisions of the Board of Supervision, which stated that poor houses were unsuitable places for children.⁸¹

The differences in the socio-economic dynamics of each of the parishes determined the nature of the poorhouse experience. For example, inmates of the St. Mary Poor House worked in the gardens, cemetery and general maintenance of the institution. A minister visited the Poor House regularly to have prayers with the inmates. In contrast, the Corporation Poor House Committee allowed the supply of Christian literature to the CPH but refused to have preaching there

⁸¹ The issue of children maintained by Poor Relief will be dealt with further in Chapter 3.

because they already had a chaplain on staff. The minutes, however, provide no real details as to the regularity with which the chaplain attended to the spiritual and emotional needs of the inmates.

All Poor Houses were mandated to provide proper shelter, health care, clothing and food to inmates during their stay there. As a result some of the best (and best is used reticently here) Poor Houses were equipped with a Tuberculosis Ward (TB), a sick bay and mortuary as well as an onsite cemetery. Poor House committees, where established and functional, facilitated the purchase of food, glasses, boots, wooden legs and the like. The Chair and his committee often stood as mediators between the Poor House inmates and staff. Theoretically they also worked closely with the Parochial Boards because they guaranteed the funds for outdoor relief as well as for maintaining the infrastructure of the facility itself. In reality, however, most committees failed to meet regularly to oversee not just the running of the institution but also to monitor the behavior of Masters and Matrons towards inmates in the facilities.

Masters and Matrons occasionally abused their power by taking advantage of inmates. A.D. Goffe, Chairman of the Board of the St. Mary Poor House Committee, visited the institution on May 5, 1925 with the Inspector of Poor to inquire into the Master's dismissal of Alexander Williams from the Poor House. The investigation revealed that although the Master had sent Williams to cut grass for his horse, Williams failed to do so because he claimed he had a sick foot.

When Williams refused to comply with the Master's repeated demands, he was accordingly discharged from the poor house. After the investigation, the Chairman ruled against the master and readmitted Williams on the grounds that the master's behavior was indiscreet and that Williams was clearly of ill health and could not be discharged from the facility.⁸² Inmates Daniel Vernon and Charles Panton, however, also made several other complaints against the master, which led to his suspension and later his resignation. The parochial board appointed Mr. T.B. Edwards, dispenser at the Port Maria Hospital, to assist the Matron with the dispensing of medication until a new master could be appointed.⁸³ Similar stories occur throughout rural poor houses in the island. The failure of either masters or matrons to effectively fulfill their duties as caretakers of almshouse inmates not only undermined their capacity to control inmates but also the efficiency of the entire system. Replacing caretakers also often proved to be a difficult task. Parochial Boards, as in the case of St. Mary, were forced to second dispensers and other government workers to take on additional duties at poor houses.

A closer study of Poor House Committee minutes as well as correspondence of the Board of Supervision revealed that not all persons admitted to the almshouse were as severely sick or as disabled as the Board of Supervision assumed. For example, on the 3rd of November 1930, two inmates of the CPH,

⁸² JA 2/16/59 (1896 – 1925), 'Minutes of the Poor House Committee, May 5, 1925.'

⁸³ JA 2/16/59 (1896 – 1925), 'Minutes of the Poor House Committee, May 5, 1925.'

Kingston, James Watt and Rufus Thompson, left the grounds of the Institution. When the master of the Poor House, Mr. Cresser, discovered that the men had left while wearing 'institution clothing,' he reported them to the police and asked that they be arrested for larceny. Mr. Cresser sent their personal clothing and belongings to the gate and instructed the gateman to hand it to them if they should at any time return. Further, he was to instruct them that they had to apply for readmission from the Inspector of the Poor.⁸⁴

Thompson and Watt returned later that evening to find the gate locked. Thompson, described as a cripple in the feet with a powerfully built upper body and known as a habitual criminal, broke the gate and made an entrance for himself and his companion Watt. Mr. Cresser confronted them and explained that they had been discharged because they absconded from the Poor House. Thompson became 'abusive,' thereby forcing Mr. Cresser to summon the Deputy Town Clerk. On the latter's arrival, he determined that the situation practically 'amounted to a rebellion and was very prejudicial to the discipline and control of the Institution.'⁸⁵ He ordered that Mr. Thompson be brought to the office. Both men, however, refused to leave the ward. Subsequently it was found that Mr. Thompson was armed with a knife. In response, the Deputy Town Clerk summoned the police. On searching Mr. Thompson, they found two knives, one

⁸⁴ JA 2/6/350 (1926 – 1931), 'Mr. Cresser, Master of the Poor House to Deputy Town Clerk, November 3, 1930.'

⁸⁵ JA 2/6/350 (1926 – 1931), 'Deputy Town Clerk to Sir William Morrison, November 4, 1930.'

under his leg on the bed and another in his shirt pocket. The Deputy Town Clerk ordered that Mr. Thompson be arrested for the 'wilful destruction of Corporation Poor House and for breaking into the Institution.'⁸⁶

The above account reveals that within the operation of the Poor House, inmates were subjected to the rules and regulations of the institution. Several staff personnel ensured the conformity of the inmates as well as the effective running of the institution. The deputy town clerk was the representative of the parish council that oversaw the finances and running of the poor house. The Inspector of the Poor determined admissions to the poorhouse as well as general access to outdoor relief. Mr. Cresser, as Master, maintained the discipline, health and care of those admitted to the institution. He was bound to the rules and regulations laid down by the parochial board, in this case the K.S.A.C, as well as the rules and regulations for the running of the Poor House as established by the Board of Supervision. The aforementioned situation revealed that poor houses were not solely infirmaries for the aged, infirm and chronically sick or a refuge for the mentally and physically disabled; they also existed as institutions to curb idleness and criminal behavior among inmates. The Jamaican almshouse, therefore, also served as an institution of discipline in which the master and matron tried, where possible, to control and regulate the movements and actions of inmates thereby forcing them to conform to the rules and regulations of the almshouse. As men,

⁸⁶ JA 2/6/350 (1926 – 1931), 'Deputy Town Clerk to Sir William Morrison, Nov. 4, 1930.'

Masters of Poor Houses were instrumental in maintaining order and discipline amongst inmates and in most instances had the full support of the Poor Relief and Poor House Committees in matters of discipline. Matrons acted as caretakers and provided assistance to medical staff wherever necessary. However, there were situations in which the disciplinary action taken by masters and matrons resulted in injury or the death of inmates.

It was revealed in an investigation that

Inmate Elizabeth Dolly had been placed in a cell on the 3rd of March for a breach of the rules. He [the master] had investigated the case and heard witnesses before awarding her any punishment, he had obtained the D.M.O's approval...She was not more than 48 hours in the cell; she got a fit in the cell was taken out and prescribed for by the Doctor and died at 3:38 pm on the same day.⁸⁷

The Corporation Poor House Committee, which ruled in support of the Master, argued that the inmate's behavior justified such severe punishment and that on the doctor's advice she was given forty-eight hours in a cell and placed on a low diet for three days. This low diet was similar to that employed in the island's prisons and the government reformatory. During the period of confinement she was properly attended to and cared for. Based on the doctor's report 'she worked herself up into such a condition that she suffered from an apoplectic seizure from

⁸⁷ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), 'Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House April 27, 1928.'

which she died.’⁸⁸ In this particular instance, the administration maintained a united front in the face of the questionable treatment of the inmate under the care of Mr. Cresser and the Corporation Poor House.

In other instances, as in the case of Ruthlin McKay and her four children, the almshouse served as a temporary house of refuge for individuals and families deported from other territories.

Ruthlin McKay and four children had been deported from British Honduras and admitted to the poor house...the woman had been taken out of the Poor House by Anabella Robertson of #5 Chancery Lane after having been admitted but the children were still at Maxfield Park and suggesting that a permit of payment for £3 found on her be claimed for their upkeep. The Committee was of the opinion that the £3 will be appropriated by the government towards their passages to Jamaica and cannot be claimed.⁸⁹

McKay and her family were among thousands of Jamaicans who had been deported from Cuba and South America to the island in the 1930s. More often than not, local colonial administrations bore the cost of transportation for returning residents as well as their sustenance upon their return as seen in the example above. The CPH Committee sought to recover the cost of maintenance of McKay’s children by claiming right of access to her money (£3). However, they were unable to do so because central government had greater claim to recoup the

⁸⁸ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), ‘Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House April 27, 1928.’

⁸⁹ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930), ‘Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston September 3, 1930.’

cost of transportation. Ultimately, then, the CPH was left to bear the cost of care for her four children.

One of the major issues associated with the poor relief administration was the cost of maintenance especially of children who had been left under the care of the administration. Parochial Boards automatically assumed guardianship of children left in their care. While these Boards were required to see to the children's general education and care, they retained the right to claim whatever funds or properties left to the children or to use the children as they saw fit so as to recover the cost of their maintenance.⁹⁰ It was clear that funding of the poor relief system in Jamaica rested heavily on the shoulders of the Parochial Boards and their committees. But the actual administration of poor relief depended on the efficiency of the Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors of Poor and their ability to cooperate with members of the Island Medical Service and parochial midwifery service as well as Parochial Boards and the Board of Supervision. Inspectors of Poor and their Assistants negotiated interdepartmental and bureaucratic conflict in an attempt to provide the best possible assistance to those in need. The centrality of these workers to maintaining the poor relief system was reflected in the ongoing conflict between parochial boards and the Board of Supervision to monitor and punish illicit activities amongst inspectors and their assistants.

⁹⁰ This will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors of Poor

The mandate of the Inspector of Poor (IP), as envisioned under the 19th century laws, was ‘strictly to examine into the circumstances and antecedents of each applicant for Relief requiring answers ... and in every case when possible requiring the presence of the applicant.’⁹¹ As a result, relieving officers represented not just the financial interests of the state but also the applicant requesting assistance, whether for temporary or permanent relief. The administration expected IPs to be observant and vigilant. They were required ‘to visit the place and abode of every Pauper receiving Outdoor relief at least once in three months without previous notice [so as] to record his opinion as to the necessity of the continuance of the person on the Pauper Roll, the increase or decrease of the allowance.’⁹² Within the framework of the administration, IP’s and their assistants were integral to the stability of poor relief. Both the BS and the Parochial Boards viewed betrayals by these workers as the ultimate sin because consistent illicit activity indicated a breakdown in the system, thereby making local and central government susceptible to ‘fraud’ by the members of the pauper community.

The IP reported individually to the Poor Relief Committee of the Parochial Boards on the Paupers receiving outdoor relief. By 1886, however, the power to

⁹¹ BNA CO 137/505/29, “The Rules for the administration and regulation of the poor were established under the first section of law 15 of 1881, "A Law further to regulate the Relief of the Poor" (subsequent amendment to be found under the 1886 legislation).

⁹² BNA CO 137/505/29, ‘Duties of Relieving Officers and Inspectors of Poor.’

discipline and dismiss IPs was granted to the Board of Supervision even though Parochial Boards initially hired these employees.⁹³ This made the IP a representative of the Board of Supervision rather than the Parochial Board. This conflict of interest came to a head in the case of Richard Wellington Aloysius Ferguson, Inspector of Poor for Kingston and St. Andrew.

On April 23, 1932, the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (K.S.A.C) suspended Mr. Richard W. Ferguson, Inspector of Poor for Kingston and St. Andrew, from his post on the advice of the Corporation Solicitor. K.S.A.C appointed Mr. D. S. Phillips, a second class Clerk, to act in his stead.⁹⁴ The Mayor of Kingston then hired a private accountant to examine the accounts of Mr. Ferguson as well as the Assistant Inspectors of Poor.⁹⁵ On June 2, 1932, the police arrested Mr. Ferguson and charged him with the falsification of accounts. Criminal proceedings were instituted against him by the K.S.A.C.

The Resident Magistrate, however, dismissed the case in October 1932. By November, the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C, wrote to the Secretary of the Board of Supervision, listing the charges filed against Ferguson and requested that he be dismissed under Section 22 of Law 6 of 1886.⁹⁶ The subsequent legal drama,

⁹³ BNA CO 137/505/29, 'Rules for the Regulation of Poor Relief.'

⁹⁴ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), 'Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to Richard Ferguson, Esq., Inspector of Poor, Kingston Jamaica April 23, 1932'; *Daily Gleaner* April 25, 1932 p. 1, 'Inspector of Poor Suspended by Mayor.'

⁹⁵ *The Daily Gleaner*, April 26, 1932 p. 1, 'Books of Suspended Inspector of Poor to be Investigated.'

⁹⁶ JA 2/6/397, 'Mr. F. N. Isaacs, Secretary of the Board of Supervision to The Town Clerk, KSAC January 17, 1933'; Law 6 of 1886 "An Act for the Relief of the Poor."

which continued well into 1934, was not simply a case of criminal misconduct by a statutory employee. Rather it reflected the ongoing struggle between the Board of Supervision, the mandated authority instituted to oversee the effective running of poor relief in the island, and the parochial boards, which bore the cost, financial and otherwise, of maintaining poor relief. This was a power struggle that included all the main players in the Jamaican poor relief administration – the Board of Supervision (BS), the Parochial Board (in this case KSAC) and the Inspector of Poor. The paupers, as the recipients of assistance, often were silenced in the power struggle that took place within local government in the early twentieth century.

Mr. Ferguson was a former graduate of St. George's College, which was and still is a première all-boys secondary high school in Kingston. He participated in the school's Old Boy's Association, played cricket, and was one of the founding members of 'Whiz Bang Club' which promoted the love of sports amongst young adults.⁹⁷ In 1916, he joined the offices of the Inspector of Poor, Kingston, which was then under the management of H.J. Rushie Gray, where he remained for ten months. After holding several posts at the K.S.A.C, he was appointed Assistant Inspector of Poor in 1922.⁹⁸ In July of 1929, he was appointed as Acting Inspector of Poor after Grey, Inspector of Poor for Kingston

⁹⁷ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 23, 1930, p. 6, 'St. George's Old Boy's Association'; *The Daily Gleaner*, October 23, 1931, p. 20, 'New Club Formed.'

⁹⁸ JA 2/6/397, "Hearing of Enquiry into the Charges against R. W. Ferguson, Inspector of Poor Kingston: Notes of Evidence" Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to D. T. C. June 13, 1933.

for 43 years, applied for a three-month leave of absence at the end of which he planned to retire.⁹⁹ The K.S.A.C subsequently appointed Mr. Ferguson to the post on November 1, 1929 without advertising for applicants.¹⁰⁰ Until his suspension in April 1932, Mr. Ferguson was praised as a ‘young and vigilant worker’ who ‘was endeavoring to render the best service possible.’¹⁰¹ However, in 1932, the K.S.A.C accused Ferguson of three counts of fraud. These included making false entries on the pauper payment roll for three persons who had either been transferred to the CPH for indoor relief or had died but continued to receive monies through outdoor relief even after death, circumstances which automatically removed the possibility of receiving funds for relief.¹⁰² They also accused him of dereliction of his duties because he failed to consistently visit paupers at their addresses to verify their socio-economic state and thus assuring the legitimacy of their application. The K.S.A.C pursued its prosecution of Ferguson to the fullest extent of the law. However, the Corporation failed to indict

⁹⁹ *The Daily Gleaner*, August 3, 1929, p. 3 ‘Resignation of Inspector of Poor.’

¹⁰⁰ *The Daily Gleaner*, October 9, 1929, p. 20 ‘Inspector of Poor’; *The Daily Gleaner*, October 30, 1929, p. 3, ‘New Inspector of Poor for the Corporation’. Only one objection to Ferguson’s hire was noted. It came from Councilor Dillon who felt that the K.S.A.C should have waited on the report of the Poor Relief Committee of which he was the chair, for their report, before hiring Ferguson. However, he noted at the time that he did not object to Ferguson holding the posts. Nonetheless Councilor Dillon was the one who reported Ferguson, for irregularities in the accounts saying that Ferguson had confessed to him that he had falsified accounts to conceal shortfalls in the cash tallies. JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to R. Parkinson Esq. April 27, 1932.’ Includes draft correspondence to the Board of Supervision.

¹⁰¹ *The Daily Gleaner*, February 11, 1930, p. 6, ‘The Affairs of the Corporation.’

¹⁰² *The Daily Gleaner*, October 19, 1932, p. 8, ‘Ferguson on trial in R.M. Court for alleged Falsification of Accounts; JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), “Hearing of Enquiry into Charges against R. W. Ferguson, Inspector of Poor, Kingston,” ‘Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to Acting D.T.C, July 10, 1933.’

Ferguson in the courts. At a special meeting in November of 1933 the K.S.A.C formally decided to submit charges against him with the Board of Supervision.¹⁰³

Four charges were proffered against Mr. Ferguson. The first focused on his neglect of duties in regards to the verification of addresses, continued relief in the case of death, as well as continued payments after the time authorized. Secondly, they accused him of failing to fulfill the requirement of visiting paupers, since the Visiting Books for 1930 contained only 361 visits when there were approximately 1,200 paupers on outdoor relief for that period. Thirdly, they claimed that he falsified entries in the Visiting Books. The fourth charge was one of general neglect of his duties in the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew. They argued that the general neglect of his duties cost the Corporation losses to a total of JA£4,000.¹⁰⁴

The Board of Supervision (BS) conducted its own investigation into the charges brought by the K.S.A.C. The Committee dismissed charges associated with the parish of St. Andrew on the basis that Ferguson worked with the paupers in Kingston and the Assistant IP's for the St. Andrew districts were responsible for pay rolls in that area. Furthermore, they also dismissed complaint four on the basis that it was too general. Members of the BS were unanimously of the opinion

¹⁰³ *The Daily Gleaner*, November 19, 1932, p. 12, 'Corporation to Hold Special Meeting'; *The Daily Gleaner* November 22, 1932, p. 22, 'Charges to be laid against R. W. Ferguson.'

¹⁰⁴ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), "Re: Inspector of Poor & Inquiry by Board of Supervision' H.H Dunn, Corporation Solicitor to Town Clerk, K.S.A.C July 10, 1933; *The Daily Gleaner*, November 22, 1932 p. 22, 'Charges to be laid against R. W. Ferguson'; Report of the Board of Supervision, 1933 p. 357; Report of the Board of Supervision 1934 p. 387.

that there was no real proof that the Corporation suffered any ‘financial loss on consequence of any act by the Inspector of Poor.’ They also unanimously found him not guilty of charges one and three. However, in the case of charge two, the Board found him guilty of some neglect in that he failed to make visits and inspections at least twice a year to persons receiving parochial relief. The Board felt, however, that the Pauper Committee of the Corporation bore some responsibility for the events that took place in the department. In their recommendations, they proposed that the Pauper Committee should be more proactive in supervising the department and reorganize the duties of each officer as well as the running of the office to increase efficiency. Finally, the Board ruled that Ferguson be reinstated less three months’ salary for the period for which he had been suspended.¹⁰⁵ K.S.A.C refused to acknowledge the ruling of the Board of Supervision and decided to appeal the case to the Governor and the Privy Council, whom the law appointed as the final arbitrator of disputes between the Board of Supervision and the Parochial Board. This, too, failed and Mr. Ferguson eventually resumed his duties as Inspector of Poor for Kingston.

Several issues come to light in this conflict between the Corporation and Mr. Ferguson. First of all, the position of the Inspector of Poor was a statutory position with statutory duties. Though appointed by the Parochial Board, as in the case of the K.S.A.C, only the Board of Supervision could dismiss Ferguson as an

¹⁰⁵ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘Chairman of the Board of Supervision, Kingston, to the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C August 11, 1933.’

officer. As a result, the K.S.A.C lacked the power to prevent Mr. Ferguson from performing his duties as Inspector of Poor. This, thereby, negated the appointment of D.S. Phillips as Acting Inspector of Poor.¹⁰⁶ Secondly, the K.S.A.C attempted to circumvent the power of the Board of Supervision, as an arbitration body between Parochial Boards and relief officers, by taking Ferguson to court where an indictment against him would undermine the Board's power to determine his fate. When that failed, they were forced to consult with the Board of Supervision.

The decision to ignore the ruling of the Board of Supervision was further complicated by the injunction submitted by Ferguson's attorneys, Milholland, Ashenheim & Stone, restricting members of the Corporation from interfering or preventing Ferguson from discharging his duties as a statutory officer of the government.¹⁰⁷ This move essentially forced the K.S.A.C to bring the matter to the Privy Council and the Governor. Nonetheless, all attempts by the K.S.A.C to have Mr. Ferguson removed from the post of Inspector of Poor failed; by late 1934 he was back at work. This case provides the best example of the complicated nature of poor relief and its administration in Jamaica during the period under review. Numerous other references to the power struggle between the Board of Supervision and the Parochial Boards were to be found in the

¹⁰⁶ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), H.H. Dunn, Corporation Solicitor to the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C August 23, 1933.

¹⁰⁷ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), 'Notice of Action to the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation and the Council' Milholland, Ashenheim & Stone to the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C August 17, 1933.' Correspondence forwarded the H.H. Dunn Corporation Solicitor.

newspapers and interdepartmental correspondence. In one particular incident, the Parochial Board of St. Thomas demanded a public apology from the Inspector of Poor on the grounds that he had left the parish without permission to consult with the Board of Supervision on matters pertaining to pauper relief in that parish.¹⁰⁸ The Chairman staunchly declared that the IP should know that the Parochial Board and not the Board of Supervision was his boss.¹⁰⁹

More importantly, however, this conflict provided a more in depth understanding of not only the workings of the poor relief administration but also the responsibilities of the Inspectors of Poor. According to the testimony of D.S. Phillips, Acting IP, approximately 1,200 paupers lived in Kingston in 1932. Most of them were old, indigent and needy, in poor health, and living in poor surroundings.¹¹⁰ The majority of them were black. When paupers made applications for assistance, a printed application was filled and personal information such as name, age, sex and color was obtained. In the case of sick paupers, the doctor (medical officer) would issue a certificate stating their ailments; this certificate would be submitted along with their application.¹¹¹ Once that process was completed, the IP submitted the paperwork to the Pauper Committee, which in turn would endorse the form and indicate the type of relief

¹⁰⁸ *The Daily Gleaner*, September 26, 1924, p. 7, 'Inspector of Poor called on to Apologize.'

¹⁰⁹ 'Inspector of Poor Called to Apologize.'

¹¹⁰ *The Daily Gleaner*, October 19, 1932, p. 9, 'Trial of Richard Ferguson on Falsification Charge.'

¹¹¹ 'Trial of Richard Ferguson on Falsification Charge.'

granted. Applicants who received outdoor relief had their names and descriptions entered into the General Register as well as the current pauper roll, with an indication of the volume and folio of the General Register. The pauper then received a card, which had to be produced in order to receive payment. Once the IP made payments, they were noted in the payroll and the total number of payments entered into the cashbook.¹¹²

The offices of the Inspector and Assistant Inspectors of Poor, therefore, handled numerous records dealing with indoor, outdoor, burial and medical relief. Books including old and current General Registers, Application Registers, Pauper Pay Rolls, Cash Books, Visiting Books of the Inspector of Poor and Letter Registers dealt with outdoor relief and general administration. Medical Attendance, Medical Report Book, Nourishment Order Books, Record of Inmates at Lunatic Asylum, Record of D.M.O highlighted elements of medical relief and assistance. Grave and Hearse Order Books included information on those individuals who requested assistance in burying loved ones. The Admission Book to the Poor House listed those persons who stayed in, received treatment, and died at the Poor House.¹¹³ The multidimensionality of assistance provided under the poor relief administration required poor relief officers to track paupers at various

¹¹² *The Daily Gleaner*, October 19, 1932, p. 8, 'Ferguson on trial in R.M. Ct for Alleged Falsification of Accounts.'

¹¹³ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), 'List taken from correspondence between D. S. Phillips, Acting Inspector of Poor for Kingston and St. Andrew to the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C, April 25, 1932 after Phillips had taken over the running of Ferguson's office.'

stages of assistance. Often, especially in large districts, there was great difficulty tracking the movement of paupers. Many individuals moved within parishes as well as to other parishes. They also, however, moved from one stage of destitution to another, that is moving from receipt of monies to nourishment, to the poor house/lunatic asylum and eventually burial. Records from rural parishes contain the names of entire family members who received relief over one or two generations. The sheer magnitude of paperwork, travelling and duties meant that these statutory workers as a whole were overworked and underpaid. Below is a table showing the breakdown of Poor Relief Districts and the number of Inspectors and Asst. Inspectors of Poor attached to each parish.¹¹⁴ Six relieving officers administered the parish of St. Catherine, which covered 498 sq. miles and had a population of over 105,000 persons. This means that on an average, each relieving officer stationed in St. Catherine could have worked with over 17,000 persons. In 1928, the parish had 512 registered paupers on indoor and outdoor relief and spent £5,602 on poor relief administration. The estimated cost of relief per head of the population was 1 shilling and 1 penny.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Table taken from Board of Supervision, Report for the year ended for 31st December 1928 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports 1928* (Kingston, Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1929) 203 – 204.

¹¹⁵ Report of the Board of Supervision, 1928, p. 207.

Table 3: Distribution of Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors of Poor Throughout Jamaica in 1928

Parish	No. of Districts	Area Sq. Miles	Estimated Population	No. of Inspectors and Ass. Inspectors
KSAC	4	190 3/4	125,880	6*
Port Royal			1,045	1
St. Thomas	3	298 1/2	45,534	4
Portland	3	338	53,533	4
St. Mary	5	251	78,508	6
St. Ann	6	487	80,317	7
Trelawny	2	353	38,037	3
St. James		239 1/2	46,276	4
Hanover	2	177	42,480	3
Westmoreland	5	320	76,075	5
St. Elizabeth	4	473 1/2	88,955	5
Manchester	2	337	71,481	3
Clarendon	3	487	92,330	4
St. Catherine	5	498	105,115	6

Source: Board of Supervision, Report for the year ended 31st December 1928

- This figure includes the Clerk for the department

Investigations into the accounts of the Inspectors of Poor often revealed cracks in the system. The investigation against Ferguson over the course of two months resulted in a complete revision of the pauper rolls of the districts in the island's capital of Kingston and the adjoining parish of St. Andrew.¹¹⁶ This included outdoor and indoor relief, as well as deaths noted on the rolls. Other Assistant Inspectors of the Poor also had proceedings brought against them for similar charges. One such person was J.H. Wilson, Assistant Inspector of Poor

¹¹⁶ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), 'Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to Mr. Phillips, Acting Inspector of Poor, Kingston, Jamaica June 6, 1932.'

based in Half-Way-Tree, Saint Andrew, who died during the course of the investigation and, therefore, could not be charged with the falsification of Pauper Pay tickets.¹¹⁷ Another person was Mr. J.A. Whitworth, Assistant Inspector of Poor, Mavis Bank District, St. Andrew, who was suspended from his duties for failure to hand over ‘all books, vouchers and other documents in [his] possession’ to the Acting Inspector of Poor to be reviewed.¹¹⁸ Whitworth claimed he destroyed the tickets as a result of a moth infestation that had begun to affect his books long before the appointment of the Acting Inspector of Poor, D. S. Phillips replaced Mr. Ferguson.¹¹⁹

Constant changes in the personnel of the administration made IPs more susceptible to instances of fraud by the ‘pauper community.’ IPs established relationships with paupers and, therefore, expected to be familiar with paupers in receipt of relief. Changing personnel disrupted old relationships and placed new IPs’ in unfamiliar territory. D. S. Phillips argued

‘A pauper is far more likely to take notice of me than I am likely to take notice of him or her. The news of such a change as [the one that] took place in the Inspector of Poor’s office would spread through the pauper population quickly. I was on the look-out for cases which would excite my suspicion. Also persons committing

¹¹⁷ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘H.H. Dunn, Corporation Solicitor to the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C, Kingston, Jamaica, May 31st, 1932.’

¹¹⁸ 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘W. J. Walker, Town Clerk, K.S.A.C to Mr. J. A. Whitworth, Asst. Inspector of Poor, Mavis Bank, St. Andrew, Jamaica, May 31, 1932.’

¹¹⁹ JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘J.A. Whitworth, former Asst. Inspector of Poor, Mavis Bank, to W. J. Walker, Town Clerk, K.S.A.C, June 4, 1932.’

frauds against the Inspector of Poor would be more on the look out than before.’¹²⁰

The importance of the IP as a policing agent was instrumental to the smooth running of the poor relief system in the early 20th century as the demand for assistance increased in the face of lessened economic opportunities. Vigilance and attention to detail was a key part of the work of an IP, as revealed in correspondence between Mr. Phillips, Acting IP in Kingston and the Town Clerk, K.S.A.C:

In the course of my paying at Half Way Tree on Friday the 27th instant when Pauper Ticket #467-Sarah Lester was presented for payment by a woman alleged to be Ellen Edwards; As she could not satisfy me as to the person who gave her the ticket, I took it away and refused payment. This morning [30th] a woman came to the office here and made enquiries claiming to be Sarah Lester at the same time demanding payment of 4/- for two weeks.¹²¹ After questioning her concerning the woman she gave the ticket, I found that she was not speaking the truth. On referring to the Pauper register, I discovered that Sarah Lester was sent to the Poor House on the 8th May 1930. I telephoned the Master of the Poor House and was informed that this pauper died on the 11th May 1930, three days after she was admitted.

I got the detective and while questioning her, she admitted that Sarah Lester was living with her but she went to the poor house and died, and she has been drawing money ever since. She then gave her name as Letetia Gray, who is a Registered Pauper on the roll, and whose ticket was presented for payment on Friday the 27th by a Pauper Miriam Satchell, this also I seized as Satchell explanation as to how she got the Ticket was not satisfactory.¹²²

¹²⁰ *The Daily Gleaner*, October 19, 1932, p. 9, ‘Trial of Richard Ferguson on Falsification Charge.’

¹²¹ 4/- means four shilling, no pennies.

¹²² JA 2/6/397 (1929 – 1934), ‘Mr. D. S. Phillips, Acting Inspector of the Poor to the Town Clerk, KSAC. May 30, 1932.’

Ms. Gray was eventually arrested and charged with receiving money under false pretences. The above incident reinforces the necessity of inspectors and their assistants to establish relationships and visit with paupers. Consistently visiting approved paupers made poor relief officers aware of changes in the socio-economic conditions and familial ties of the recipient. Possibly Ms. Lester received outdoor relief as unemployed and temporarily disabled pauper and was eventually transferred to indoor relief due to her worsening medical condition. Ms. Gray may also have been granted outdoor relief as Ms. Lester's fulltime caretaker. If this were the case, Ms. Lester's death would have allowed Ms. Gray as an able-bodied woman to seek employment and therefore be removed from the pauper roll. Failure, however, to verify the change in Letetia Gray's home situation allowed her, under the watch of Mr. Ferguson, to successfully abuse the limited financial resources of the Corporation.¹²³ Letetia Gray's behavior should also be placed within the wider context that women were least likely to receive employment from the Corporation or the government whenever temporary unemployment relief became available. Most women were forced to be creative when locating alternate sources of income. Invariably, they were the ones most likely to request poor relief, especially if they had children. In this particular incident, it was possible that Letetia Gray was using Sarah Lester's financial relief

¹²³ BNA CO 137/761 #754, The K.S.A.C was notoriously indebted and had limited financial resources.

to supplement her own economic situation while at the same time sharing her own money with other women around her.

The sharing of one's dole was a fairly familiar practice in the rural areas. In districts where pay officers were few and far away, paupers were sometimes required to travel ten to twelve miles in both directions to collect their dole. It was not uncommon to see 'a small child at a Pay Table with a packet of cards for paupers whose money he or she was to collect.'¹²⁴ It was standard practice for persons to receive a small 'commission', from the small amount, for collecting the money. Unfortunately, in some cases, pauper tickets and/or some of their dole were stolen by those entrusted to collect their money. In a 1937 report aimed at highlighting the prevalence of such practices, a reference was made to an 1887 report in which a pauper ticket had been pawned so as to secure a pledge from a shopkeeper.¹²⁵ Issues such as distance and inadequate transportation served to hinder the effectiveness of Inspectors of Poor in their duties. However, in the case of Kingston and St. Andrew, the large number of paupers trafficking through the offices in Down Town, Kingston and Half-Way Tree, St. Andrew, made it impossible for the inspectors to know each pauper beyond the point of facial familiarity. This made home visits absolutely essential to the verification process. In one incident Mary Wilson was struck off the roll after it had been discovered

¹²⁴ Board of Supervision – Report for the year ending 31st December 1937 in *The Annual General Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports* (Duke Street, Jamaica: Government Printer, 1938) 172.

¹²⁵ Board of Supervision, 1937, 172.

that her claim of being widowed was false. The Inspector of Poor, Ferguson, found her husband not only alive, but also living with her at their home in Kingston.¹²⁶ By the 1930s, however, it was found that most Inspectors of Poor failed to fulfill their obligation to visit paupers twice per year. The returns of the BS for 1937, showed that of the 11,223 registered paupers, inspectors visited 9,804 paupers twice as required by law. However, the remaining 1,258 paupers were visited once while 234 never met with any poor relief official.¹²⁷

Conclusion

This chapter examined the complex administration of the poor relief system and its relationship with other administrative bodies in the provision of social services. During the interwar years, the Jamaican Poor Relief administration struggled to cope with the socio-cultural and economic conditions that plagued majority of the population. The Jamaican government lacked not only the will but also the financial and human resource capabilities to improve and expand the current system of poor relief in the island. Numerous proposals to build residential homes for orphans as well as the physical and mentally disabled, industrial schools for juvenile offenders, hospitals for the sick and hospices for the aged and infirm were tabled on the basis of strained financial resources. Several attempts, however, were made to improve general public health in the

¹²⁶ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1928), ‘Minutes and Report of the Pauper Committee, Union Poor House, Kingston, December 17, 1924.’

¹²⁷ Board of Supervision, 1937, 172.

island through the yaws and hookworm campaigns. Building roads and general infrastructure as well as maintaining agricultural sector, however, took precedence over improving the health and quality of life of the average Jamaican colonial citizen.¹²⁸ The government, therefore, emphasized the role of the family over the state in catering for the needs of the dispossessed. Nonetheless, fluctuations in the global economy that propelled internal and external migration disrupted community and familial networks. Failure to find employment eventually led to crime, dilapidated housing developments and poor health. The poorest Jamaicans turned to the state for assistance.

Over time, the cost of administering relief in the 1920s and 30s mirrored the increasing costs of living as the island's tax base stagnated in the face of a contracting economy. Those accessing poor relief were amongst the poorest in the island. The island's medical infrastructure failed to meet the needs of the average Jamaican. As a result, relief in the form of medical assistance, both through the ticket system and admittance to the almshouse, as well as other forms of outdoor relief was absolutely essential for the alleviation of temporary and permanent destitution.

Even though Parochial Boards funded the relief administration, Inspectors of Poor along with their assistants were essential in maintaining the system.

¹²⁸ For further discussion on public health campaigns please see Winsome Watson – Pusey 'Public Health in Jamaica 1850 – 1880' (MA Thesis, Dpt. of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1991); Violet Smythe – Stevenson 'Public Health in Jamaica in the Early 20th Century' (MA History, Dpt. Of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1992).

Inspectors of Poor represented the needs of the temporary and permanent sick, the aged and infirm, as well as the mentally and physically disabled. They were integral in stemming fraud and protecting the financial interests of the Parochial Board. Relieving officials worked extensively with the island medical service as well as the education and prison departments so as to facilitate collaborations amongst the various departments. However, their efforts were hindered by extensive interdepartmental conflict, underfunding, and bureaucratic red tape, all of which undermined the capacity of these officers to work efficiently especially in regards to the care of children who fell under the poor relief system.

In the early twentieth century, members of the elite became preoccupied with the existence of not just visible forms of poverty but also the rise of a juvenile criminal and destitute class. Several well-meaning citizens wrote letters to the editor of Jamaica's leading newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*, complaining of the prevalence of visible signs of poverty throughout Kingston, the island's capital. H.E. Henderson-Davis bemoaned the eyesore caused by the poor and dispossessed living in squalor on the streets of Kingston on a daily basis. He described paupers as being 'generally a weak, hungry-looking, sick, dirty, ragged lot, not infrequently exhibiting physical deformities.'¹²⁹ Henderson-Davis argued

¹²⁹ *The Daily Gleaner*, January 18, 1919, p. 21, H. E. Henderson – Davis' 'The Conditions in Kingston'; For more information on social conditions in Jamaican in the early twentieth century see Brian Moore and Michele A. Johnson (eds.) "*Squalid Kingston*" 1890 – 1920: *How the Poor Lived, Moved and Had Their Being* (Jamaica: Social History Project, Dpt. of History, University of the West Indies, Mona 2000) and Claus F. Stolberg (ed) *Jamaica 1938: The Living Conditions*

that the prevalence of the socially alienated, physically disabled, and economically dispossessed on the streets was ample evidence of the failure of the poor relief system rather than the poorly functioning Jamaican economy.¹³⁰ Many felt that as taxpayers it was their right to be 'rid of eyesores' such as beggars, the aged and infirm, as well as the mentally and physically disabled.

Of greater concern was the prevalence of young children on the streets and brought before the courts. Members of the elite wrestled with the notion of a juvenile criminal class emerging from the laboring classes who failed to adequately supervise and protect their children. Illegitimacy rather than structural poverty was identified as the leading cause of the breakdown of the Jamaican family. Chapter three examines the notion of the rise of an uncontrollable black juvenile population in the early twentieth century and its impact on the protection and education of children as wards of the state.

of the Urban and Rural Poor. Two Social Surveys (Jamaica: Social history Project, Dpt. Of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1990).

¹³⁰ *The Daily Gleaner*, January 18, 1919, p. 21, H. E. Henderson – Davis' 'The Conditions in Kingston.'

Chapter Three

Eradicate before you Educate: Unpacking The Menace of Juvenile Law Breakers in Jamaica in the early Twentieth Century*

Introduction

‘I refer to the rising generation...the juvenile population [which] may be divided into two groups, the criminal and non-criminal sectors of the lower class population...’¹

Immediately after emancipation, the Jamaican white and colored elite perceived juvenile vagrancy, delinquency and pauperism as direct consequences of the limitations of the Afro-Jamaican family structure. Reports of homeless boys roaming in gangs in the urban areas occurred alongside accusations of sexual immorality amongst juveniles in seasonal jobbing gangs in the rural areas. Newspaper accounts documented extensive complaints of the indecent behavior - such as stone throwing, indecent language, drunken behavior, and fighting of youths in the streets. They blamed this behavior on the widespread existence of illegitimacy, which signaled a lack of parental supervision and moral guidance.² These accounts occurred alongside predictions of economic doom and complaints

*Section of title taken from BNA CO 137/337 #63 ‘The Half Yearly Report of the Ladies Reformatory Association’; *The Daily Gleaner*, January 13, 1920, p. 13 T. Gordon Somers (The Jamaica League) ‘Seeking Better Conditions Here.’

¹ *The Daily Gleaner* July 6, 1918, p. 4, H. E. Henderson Davis’ ‘Open Letter to the Governor.’

² This was discussed in the *Juvenile Commission Report*; *The Daily Gleaner*, January 15, 1895, R. A. Walcott ‘Juvenile Criminals and the Reformatory.’

of inadequate public health services in the island.³ This discourse continued in the early twentieth century as increased calls for the suppression of illegitimacy through legislative means occurred within the context of an increased fear of a juvenile criminal class, members of whom they believed were also guilty of praedial larceny. In a letter to the Editor of *The Daily Gleaner*, R. E. Clarke argued that

‘To attempt the suppression of praedial larceny by severe measures until the evil of illegitimacy has been dealt with, is to be guilty of the folly of labouring to purify the stream without cleansing the source.’⁴

Members of the Jamaican elite perceived illegitimacy as a reflection of the instability of the Jamaican family and the underlying cause of the menace of juvenile delinquency, neglected children and praedial larceny throughout the twentieth century. Many, therefore, conceived of juvenile crime as a social rather than an economic issue. Changes to the laws associated with the punishment of juvenile offenders therefore occurred within this broader context of illegitimacy as a great social evil.

Efforts to alter ‘illegitimacy rates’ in the island reinforced the visibility of laboring class children as criminals and delinquents in need of reformation. By the 1930s, Jamaica’s central and local governments became key participants in

³ *De Cordova’s Advertising Sheet*, June 10, 1878, p. 3, ‘Juvenile Vagrancy and Stone Throwing’; *De Cordova’s Advertising Sheet*, November 8, 1878, p. 4, ‘Political Prophesying: Jamaica Doomed.’

⁴ *The Daily Gleaner*, June 27, 1914, p. 13, R. E. Clarke ‘The Great Social Evil.’

reformation process through the housing and training of juvenile delinquents and destitute children. Jamaican law explicitly stated that because children under seven years were not of sufficient capacity to commit a crime, they, therefore, could not be held responsible.⁵ The term “child”, therefore, referred to anyone below the age of twelve years. The courts defined a ‘young person’ as anyone older than twelve years of age but younger than sixteen years old.⁶ Juvenile delinquents or offenders broadly referred to any individual above the age of five years and below sixteen years.⁷

Among colonial administrators, debates on the criminality of laboring class children were part of a larger concern about social control. Throughout the interwar years, the Jamaican government regularly expressed concern about the possibility of social upheavals due to worsening economic conditions. These concerns heightened especially after World War One with the return of the disbanded British West India Regiment and peaked again during the Great depression.⁸ In each circumstance, government officials believed that high unemployment as well as the high cost of living would upset law and order in the

⁵ Law 25 of 1904, ‘Young Criminal Offenders Law,’ *Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1905).

⁶ Law 25 of 1904.

⁷ General correspondence uses the notion of the juvenile delinquent broadly, however, the earliest law identifying Juvenile Offenders, Law 8 of 1896 ‘Juvenile Offenders law (repealed by Law 25 of 1904), defines them as anyone above the age of 10 years but below the age of 16 years.

⁸ See Chapter Three in Nigel Bolland’s *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean 1934 - 1939* (Kingston: Ian Randle Press, 1995)

island.⁹ Discussions, therefore, about illegitimacy and criminality were grounded within a larger discourse about social order and control. This chapter explores the ways in which this dialogue on social order implicated and impacted the lives of children of the laboring classes.

Perceptions about children of the laboring classes as well as juvenile offenders within the public forum directly impacted on the lives of children who were wards of the state. Many argued that the existence of destitute and criminal children signaled the failure of the family unit amongst the laboring population. This ongoing public discourse in newspaper editorials between 1900 and 1938 connected illegitimacy and criminality by suggesting that the former was the main cause of juvenile delinquency, the prevalence of neglected children, and praedial larceny in the island. The centrality of illegitimacy in this discourse emerged in the immediate post emancipation period, and continued into the twentieth century by informing legislation associated with industrial school education and poor relief. Many of the general participants in this discussion originated with the landowning, merchant and middle classes. This included ministers of religion, teachers, civil servants and other leading members of civic society. Popular notions of the deviance of Jamaican laboring class children informed policies adopted to regulate larceny in general, praedial larceny in particular, vagrancy as

⁹ See BNA CO 137/726 #'s 267 and 283 as well as CO 137/733 (Confidential Correspondence) discuss socio-economic causes of existing unrest in Kingston and at Amity Hall during the years 1918 - 1919

well as dealing with juvenile delinquents and neglected children. The notion that illegitimacy underscored criminality and neglect eventually changed during the 1920s and 1930s, to emphasize the state enforced rehabilitation and re-socialization of 'illegitimate' children as a means of securing the island's economic prosperity.

This discourse, while not specific to the early twentieth century, suggested a continuous preoccupation of the state, the Jamaican upper and middle classes with finding ways to intervene in the private sphere, that is the family, of the Jamaican laboring population. Many of the writers of the letters to the editor either critiqued or supported the perspectives of their peers. An examination of the perspective of the writers in the newspapers may be perceived as limiting children's agency as active contributors to society. Such an approach, however, reveals that children of the laboring population were social actors whose significant visibility was due to the fact that they were actively rejecting or accepting the roles prescribed to them.¹⁰ There exists within the sources no real sense of the number of juvenile delinquents or neglected children roaming the streets or communities throughout Jamaica. Yet many members of the ruling classes believed that on the rampage was a juvenile criminal class whose members were products of unstable family structures. Although ideas of child welfare in the international community, Europe and the United States influenced

¹⁰ Audra Diptee and Martin Klein, 'African Childhoods and the Colonial Project' *Journal of Family History* [2010] 35:3, (3 – 6) 6.

local discussion, a more nuanced assessment of editorials and official correspondence revealed that local conditions influenced the nature of government policy towards children of the laboring classes. Wards of the state, such as children convicted by the courts and those maintained by the poor relief system existed within this ongoing public dialogue concerning the need for social reform, control and moral regulation. As such, these children existed as living testimony to the rise of a criminal and abandoned class of children in the island. This chapter seeks, therefore, to elucidate local perspectives of the real social problems that Jamaica faced in the early twentieth century – illegitimacy, praedial larceny and poverty.

Social Evil: Illegitimacy and the Jamaican Family

The value of a child during slavery depended on his/her socio-economic position within society. Children of the planter class, poor whites, as well as the land/asset owning free colored population symbolized the continuity of or improvement upon existing wealth and social status. They represented potential upward social and economic mobility if schooled or socialized properly. Amongst the enslaved, however, children signified a reinforcement of enslaved status. Planters viewed enslaved children who survived infancy as potential labor and value added to the overall wealth of their estates. During this period, no real notion of ‘childhood’ or ‘adolescence’ existed for enslaved children. Once they

had attained six years of age, regardless of their gender, children were employed in the general labor force to work in the fields alongside their parents and other members of the slave community.¹¹ During Apprenticeship, the formerly enslaved reserved the right to keep their children to themselves, thereby removing them from estate labor. This, however, did not alter the perceived value of 'labor' or wage earning capacity of children especially in the post emancipation period. The average laboring class Jamaican believed that every home should have a child and as a result those who had multiple children sometimes sent one or more to family and community members, for short periods of time, to stay with those who had no children of their own.¹² This practice occurred regularly among the Afro-Jamaican population as children worked in their family's subsistence fields, those of the extended community, around the house as well as at the market. Eventually, many became a part of the agricultural population by the age of fifteen years.

Early provision for educating the children of the ex-slave population was established with the Negro Education Grant, through which the Imperial government provided £30,000 per annum for the provision of education for ex-slaves.¹³ Under this system the newly freed received basic religious instruction

¹¹ Beverly Blake, 'A History of Children in 19th Century Jamaica' (MPhil Thesis, Department of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1990).

¹² Erna Brodber, *The Second generation of freemen in Jamaica, 1907 – 1944* (Gainesville, Florida (University of Florida Press, 2004) 22.

¹³ Shirley Gordon, *A Century of West Indian Education: A Source Book* (London: Longman's Green and Co. Ltd. 1963) 19. For more contemporary work on Education in Jamaica especially in the twentieth century see Khitanya Petgrave 'Saving the Children of the Black West Indies:

from missionary-run schools that were supported by government grants. The instruction in these schools included reading, writing and basic arithmetic. In its early phases, therefore, education focused on improving the moral condition of the newly freed population. Although this structure eventually provided the foundation for elementary and primary school education in the Caribbean, several factors continued to affect its efficiency into the twentieth century.

Inadequate infrastructure in rural areas forced many persons living in the mountainous interior to travel long distances to towns in search of educational and medical facilities. In 1938, an estimated population of 196,000 children between the ages of 7 and 14 years old lived in the island. Of this number 158,413 were enrolled in primary schools with an average of 46% (89,221) attending all sessions. Many of these students were housed in 661 government schools built to hold 121,148 students.¹⁴ Such figures suggest that the education system was plagued with significant overcrowding and under-attendance. Similarly for St. Vincent, figures for the early 1930s revealed that 35 percent of the population between the ages of 4 and 15 did not attend school.¹⁵

Earlier commissions such as the Marriott Mayhew Report on Education in 1933 revealed that average attendance with enrollment for the region was 66%.

Education and Development in Jamaica at the end of Empire 1938 – 1962 (PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 2008).

¹⁴ BNA CO 950/137, West India Royal Commission Questionnaire, p. 15.

¹⁵ Shirley C. Gordon, *Reports and repercussions in West Indian Education 1835 – 1933* (England: Ginn and Company Ltd. 1968), 156 – 57.

Of this figure the infant department accounted for 40% of children actively attending schools.¹⁶ Factors affecting the education of adolescents included inadequate funding to expand infrastructure so as to improve access to all children at all levels of education. A large student-to-teacher ratio limited individual interaction for students. Finally a continued reliance on children's labor amongst family holdings in rural areas eventually resulted in spotty attendance at school. Although many parents attempted to send their children to school, economic necessity such as help for harvesting and selling at the market on Thursdays and Fridays often took preference over education.

General opposition to education policy throughout the nineteenth century argued that book learning 'spoiled' the agricultural workforce, thereby making them inadequately suited for working in an agriculturally based economy. In this regard, under Lord Elgin proposals were made by members of the land-owning class for the creation of industrial schools in which black Jamaicans were given proper training to work in the agricultural industry or in the supplemental industries as masons, bricklayers, carpenters, dressmakers, and homemakers.¹⁷ A key part of this industrial education was an attempt to re-socialize children to be ideal peasants and agricultural workers through gender specific education. Girls would learn to be homemakers and boys would be wage earners. Continuous

¹⁶ Gordon, 157.

¹⁷ Earl of Elgin, *Six Essays on the Best Mode of Establishing and Conducting Industrial Schools Adapted to the Wants and Circumstances of an Agricultural Population* (London: Cowie, Jolland and Company, 1845).

economic decline throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, however, resulted in very few economic opportunities to absorb the island's large unskilled labor force. While discourse about an 'industrial education' remained at the forefront of social and economic reform, social issues such as crime and violence, juvenile delinquency, vagrancy and praedial larceny became the concern of the elite populations. They lay blame at the foot of the dysfunctional familial and kinship structures amongst the laboring population.

During the post emancipation period, every family member of the Jamaican laboring population was a potential source of income. Poor economic conditions and increased external and internal migration reinforced the dual role of women as nurturers and providers while simultaneously increasing the value of children's labor in the household. Despite the introduction of Victorian ideals of the nuclear family and the gender-based division of labor between the public and private spheres, amongst the Jamaican laboring community the value of women and children's labor was on par with and, in many cases, surpassed that of men.¹⁸ This was born out of the need to guarantee the survival of the entire family unit.

¹⁸ Henrice Altink, "To Wed or Not to Wed?": The Struggle to Define Afro-Jamaican Relationships 1834 – 1838 *Journal of Social History* vol. 38, no. 1, fall 2004; Henrice Altink, "The Misfortune of Being Black and Female": Black Feminist thought in interwar Jamaica. *Thirdspace* 5 #2 (Winter 2006); Bridget Brereton, Family Strategies, Gender and the Shift to Wage Labor in the British Caribbean in Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (eds.) *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Mimi Sheller, 'Acting as Free Men: Subaltern Masculinities and Citizenship in Postslavery Jamaica' Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (eds.) *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Charles, Persis. 'The name of the Father: Women, Paternity and British Rule in

In reality, laboring class Jamaican familial and kinship practices never conformed to European perceptions of marriage and familial practices. Heavy reliance on the extended kinship network as well as the matrilineal focus of nuclear family stood in defiance of Victorian ideals of the male-headed household. This dichotomy between European notions of kinship and Afro-Jamaican practices continued to be reflected in the class conflicts that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Adherence to the ideal of marriage and the nuclear family unit was often viewed as a mode and indicator of upward social and economic mobility. In reality, however, many ex-slaves lacked the economic stability necessary to adhere to and participate in such domestic aspirations. Furthermore, state enforced policies contributed to the increased removal of black women from agricultural work so as to provide greater opportunities for men by the 1880s.¹⁹ As a result, many laboring class Afro and Indo – Jamaican women remained outside the home because they had to earn an income, yet were unwelcome in and lacked access to structured economic spaces. Many laboring class women opted to migrate to other countries in search of work while leaving their children behind to be maintained by the external familial network, which might have included the wider community.

Nineteenth Century Jamaica' *International Labor and Working – Class History* 41 (Spring, 1992) 4 – 22.

¹⁹ Aleric Josephs 'Female Occupation in Jamaica 1844 – 1944': *Becoming Professional Women* (MPhil (History) University of the West Indies, Mona, 1993).

Early anthropological investigations into family structures in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean revealed that multiple family types coexisted. These included the Christian family, Maternal or Grandmother family and faithful concubinage.²⁰ The Christian family referred to the standard nuclear family in which the father tended to be the head of the household. Most of these women combined domestic roles with employment in the labor force. Where possible some might stay at home and maintain the domestic unit. In the maternal or grandmother unit, the woman was the head of the household and lived with her daughter(s) and grandchildren. Several generations would be housed in the same home. Concubinage referred to present day common-law relationships but various forms of concubinage exist in the Caribbean. In a faithful concubinage relationship, the man and woman are not married but live together and maintain a family structure. Within the contemporary context, this type of family unit is referred to as a common law relationship. Others such as the 'visiting' union referred to a situation in which the man visits the woman in her respective family unit. Such unions are not often permanent and both parties may soon develop alternate relationships.²¹

²⁰ Edith Clarke *My Mother Who Fathered me: A Study of Three Selected Communities of Jamaica* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad: University of the West Indies Press, 1999); Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953) 106; Raymond Smith, *Kinship and Class in the West Indies: A Genealogical study of Jamaica and Guyana* (London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4 and Judith Blake, *Family Structure in Jamaica: The Social Context of Reproduction* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe Inc. 1961).

²¹ Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me*.

Broader discussions of the Jamaican family reflected contradictions within societal values. The upper and middle classes argued that the family unit was the foundation of the civilized society. The failure, however, of the laboring classes to conform to the standard of the nuclear family reflected their ‘immorality’ but also signaled doom for the prosperity of Jamaican society. The Synod of the Church of England in Jamaica in 1900 attributed the high level of illegitimacy and low rates of marriage amongst the working class to the legacy of slavery and a complete ignorance of morality.²²

‘They had heard some reasons given for that most distressing state of affairs...the bad influences of slavery time still felt, the bad influences of those parents who have lived sinful lives...the people really had no idea of the heinousness of living in sin. They also have a vague idea that the thing was wrong but they do not feel that it was wrong.’²³

Ministers of the Synod sent a memorial to the Governor of Jamaica highlighting their concerns with the rising rate of illegitimacy and the ineffectiveness of existing legislation. The memorial spurred debate in the newspapers about illegitimacy and the morality of the Jamaican community. Some persons agreed with the Synod and argued that ‘it (illegitimacy) is eating the heart and strength of the community’ while simultaneously undermining the productivity and profitability of the island.²⁴ Others, however, highlighted the gender bias within the Maintenance, Bastardy and Registration laws which effectively criminalized

²² *The Daily Gleaner*, Feb 8, 1900, ‘Synod of the Church of England.’

²³ ‘Synod of the Church of England.’

²⁴ *The Daily Gleaner*, Feb 15, 1900, ‘The Church of England and Illegitimacy.’

women for failing to identify the fathers of their children. Such failure prevented the fathers from honoring their responsibility as providers, thus forcing women to take on this dual role as providers and nurturers. The Maintenance Act sentenced a woman to possible death for abandoning and/or failing to provide for her children but provided no real punishment for men who failed to live up to their responsibility. As Henry Clarke plainly stated

‘...If the father is allowed by law to conceal paternity and desert his child, surely the mother is surely entitled to the same privilege and its monstrous injustice to deprive her of it, so long as the father has it...the men of the governing class legislate with cruel cowardly and shameless injustice for the protection of themselves and men of their class for the consequences of their own crime...’²⁵

Mr. Clarke’s succinct letter to the editor clearly revealed that not all Jamaicans agreed that the burden of care and maintenance of children born outside of wedlock should be borne solely by mothers. More importantly, he hinted to the practice among men in the upper classes to maintain adulterous relationships with women of the laboring classes without accepting responsibility for their progeny. To place the burden of blame for illegitimacy on the laboring class, therefore, was to ignore the prevalence of such practices among men in the higher orders of society. Illegitimacy, as a ‘social evil’, pervaded all levels of Jamaican society.²⁶

²⁵ *The Daily Gleaner*, February 13, 1900, Henry Clarke, ‘The Illegitimacy Question.’

²⁶ The median rate of illegitimacy in Jamaica between 1919 and 1938 was 71.73 or 71 out of 100 children were illegitimate. Compiled from the Yearly Reports of the Registrar General’s Department in the *Annual Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports 1919 – 1938* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office).

Yet the Illegitimacy Commission of 1904 reinforced earlier arguments in regards to the main causes of illegitimacy in the island. Members argued that ‘poverty, ignorance, the history of the people in the island [along with] their temperament [and] their present stage of mental and moral development’ all accounted for the prevalence of illegitimacy in the island.’²⁷ Illegitimacy not only condemned the child but also marginalized the mother. J.T. Edman wrote to the editor in response to the case of Charles Matthews, who was brought to court for failing to send his child to school. Once the judge discovered that the child was illegitimate, he argued that the father had no legal obligation to send the child to school; rather, it was the responsibility of the mother to see to the education and training of the children. Under the law, an illegitimate child had no father unless the father himself claimed ownership of the child. Only in the case of such a declaration was the father obligated to support his child.²⁸

This preoccupation with illegitimacy continued throughout the early twentieth century. In Europe, the notion of the legitimate versus illegitimate initially had more to do with the regulation of property and political rights than morality. It was an attempt to determine who inherited wealth. Over time the church loaned its support by promoting marriage and the nuclear family as a form of social regulation. Colonial societies inherited the idea that illegitimacy was a form of socially deviant behavior despite the prevalence of illegitimate children in

²⁷ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 29, 1904, p. 8, ‘The Report at Last.’

²⁸ *The Daily Gleaner*, March 6, 1917, p. 13, J.T. Edman, ‘Illegitimacy Evil.’

many societies.²⁹ Although members of the elite accepted illegitimacy as a form of social deviance, amongst the Jamaican laboring population no real stigma was attached to illegitimacy, common-law or visiting relationships. Colonial administrators reiterated throughout their correspondence the general nonchalance of the Afro-Caribbean populations in regards to marriage and illegitimacy. In fact, officials in Barbados argued that illegitimate children were more likely to suffer from neglect than legitimate children. The general consensus was, however, that no evidence existed to support these statements due to the general low standard of living in the island.³⁰

Nonetheless perceptions of the sexual immorality of the laboring classes persisted despite the fact that all classes engaged in some form of concubinage or common-law relationships. Based on such evidence, Caribbean anthropologists of the 1950s refuted earlier arguments that the existence of different family groupings was a result of slavery and, therefore, historical. Rather, they suggested that economic factors such as the decline of agriculturally based economy in the face of increased capitalism and industrialization made fluidity an essential part of the survival of Caribbean families in the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

²⁹ Most of the work associated with illegitimacy and bastardy does not focus on the origins of illegitimacy but rather the reasons behind its existence. Please see Peter Laslet et al., (eds), *Bastardy and its Comparative History: Studies in the History of Illegitimacy, Marital Non-conformism in Britain, France, Germany, North America, Jamaica and Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980); Kingsley Davis, 'Illegitimacy and Social Structure' *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 45 #2 (Sep. 1939) 215 – 233.

³⁰ BNA CO 950/566 (Barbados), 'West India Royal Commission: Questionnaire on Certain Matters Pertaining to Social Welfare – Child Welfare.' Similar discussions can be found for the island of St. Vincent in BNA CO 950/376.

Key to this survival was, and still is, the separation of ideas of family and marriage amongst the working class population. Scholars such as Patrick Bryan, Edith Clarke and Raymond Smith revealed that working class women believed that unmarried unions resulted in greater equality of the sexes. They, therefore, often opted to retain their independence and delayed marriage until much later in life. Socio-economic realities reinforced such beliefs, as many women were required to become the sole breadwinner in the family unit. Domesticity, therefore, reflected socio-economic stability that was in many ways inherently contradictory to the standard existence of working class women and their families. Given the fluidity of the Jamaican family since Emancipation as well as the paucity of nuclear units in which parents married, notions of illegitimacy or bastardy underscored claims of the widespread existence of the destitute children and juvenile delinquency in the early twentieth century.

Juvenile Criminality in the Twentieth Century

‘...It makes one sick to think there are at least ten thousand children in Jamaica today who are receiving no education except criminal education.’³¹

Concerns about juvenile delinquency and destitution persisted throughout the early twentieth century. Many believed that illegitimate children would, due to a lack of parental guidance and supervision, eventually become offenders rather

³¹ *The Daily Gleaner* January 28, 1920, p. 14, Thomas H. Sharp ‘Electors of St. Catherine.’

than productive citizens. The prevalence of a juvenile delinquent and destitute class signaled doom for Jamaica's future. Newspaper reports of juvenile offenders being convicted of larceny, praedial larceny and vagrancy reinforced local perceptions of an uncontrollable juvenile population. Of all of these, praedial larceny received the most mention, being perceived as the preferred crime of women and children. Public discourse, therefore, tied evidence of extensive juvenile delinquency to fluctuations in praedial larceny in the island.

Praedial larceny refers to the unlawful possession of agricultural produce, livestock or fish.³² Law 38 of 1896 and its amendments governed the regulation of praedial larceny in early twentieth century Jamaica. Praedial larceny existed, and continues to be, as a branch of larceny. Throughout the years, however, it received separate treatment due to the centrality of agriculture to the Jamaican economy. Concerns about praedial larceny occurred in any area where farming took place. Generally children walking to and from school or running errands easily accessed low hanging mangoes, Jamaican otaheite apples, sweet and sour sops, guavas, and cocoas. In fact, sugar estates and farms often bordering major thoroughfares were unfenced, thereby enabling the easy removal of a stalk of cane, a hand of banana or yam sometimes without actually trespassing on a farmer's property. All these acts, however, constituted a form of praedial larceny as the individual failed to receive the consent of the owner. As a result, anyone

³² As defined by the Praedial Larceny Act of 1983.

stopped with an animal, fruits or ground provisions would be required to prove ownership or legal acquisition of the aforementioned items. Failure to do so resulted in imprisonment, fine or corporal punishment. So while easy access to fruits and other foodstuff has been known to be a key part of the childhood experience of the average Jamaican child as well as the alleviation of extreme hunger and poverty for those in need and in times of natural disaster, the loss of potential income to farmers meant that the courts took a very strong position on the crime.

At the general meeting in 1917 of the Prisoner's Aid Society, the Chairman expressed the view that praedial thieves rather than the habitual criminal was the rule in Jamaican society. Contending that praedial larceny was a crime limited to juvenile offenders, children and women, he felt that 'the way in which praedial larceny had developed in this country...it had gone so bad that he had heard of cases where they gravel out the corn before it had had a chance to grow.'³³ Another writer to *The Daily Gleaner* noted that 'praedial larceny like a hydra-headed [problem] still stalks fearlessly through [his] district.'³⁴ The centrality of praedial larceny to discussions of crime in Jamaica existed as a testament to the commitment of the colony's elite to maintaining agriculture as the base of the island's economy. Organizations such as the Jamaican Agricultural Society and Jamaican Imperial Association advocated the use of extreme

³³ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 4, 1917, p. 12, 'Prisoner's Aid Association.'

³⁴ *The Daily Gleaner* May 22, 1918, p. 13, 'Late Happenings at Bog Walk.'

measures to punish those culpable of such crimes. This included the reintroduction of stocks and longer jail sentences so as to deter habitual praedial larcenists.³⁵ Some individuals felt that imprisonment failed to sufficiently deter persons from committing praedial larceny. One writer to the editor of *The Gleaner*, Stephen Parchment of Spanish Town, commented that ‘imprisonment serves only as an introduction to...private lodging in as much as in the majority of cases parties convicted...return in the pink of condition appearing as if they had just returned from a trip abroad.’³⁶ In fact, he believed that prisoners often improved in terms of their weight and general health during their incarceration. He suggested stricter enforcement of the Vagrancy Law, the public flogging of praedial larcenists, and the boarding out of juvenile offenders with respectable members of the public as a more useful solution to arresting these problems.

Not all Jamaicans agreed with the mainstream discussions of praedial larceny and illegitimacy. There existed a general belief that although illegitimacy was a great social and moral issue, it did not necessarily produce morally inept individuals. They argued that the connection between praedial larceny and illegitimacy was tenuous at best due to the increased number of children accessing education in the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁷ Some suggested that the underlying cause of praedial larceny was associated with the fluctuations in the

³⁵ JA 1B/5/76/3/326 ‘Habitual Criminal Laws.’

³⁶ *The Daily Gleaner*, June 28, 1917, p. 11, ‘Praedial Larceny.’

³⁷ *Daily Gleaner* January 31, 1911, p. 8, ‘Mr. Esson’s Problem.’

weather and crop seasons. Natural disasters such as drought, flooding and hurricanes inevitably pushed up the rate of praedial larceny in the island. Writers such as R. E. Clarke felt that as a result of these factors the use of extreme measures to suppress praedial larceny generally failed.³⁸

‘Is it anything to be surprised at that, when, owing to the destruction of agricultural produce by hurricane, drought and floods, thousands and tens of thousands of persons are suffering the pang of hunger, numbers of them should resort to the stealing of food to satisfy their hunger.’³⁹

The link between praedial larceny and natural disasters or unstable weather patterns suggested that severe punishment for this crime treated the symptoms rather than the actual problem - structural poverty often reinforced by unstable weather patterns that characterized the region.

R. E. Clarke went further to state that the terms of sentence tended to be generally barbaric. Using statistics from 1879, he pointed out that 634 out of over 9,000 persons were convicted of praedial larceny. Of this number 109 received 3,968 lashes, an average of twenty-one lashes per person. Historically, such actions failed to actually reduce the incidence of praedial crime in the island and the punishment often failed to suit the crime.⁴⁰ For example, a judge in rural St. Catherine convicted and sentenced Victoria and Rosa Goldson, a mother and her daughter, in 1916, of stealing a quantity of cocoa valued at eleven shillings. They

³⁸ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 28, 1913, p. 13, Mr. R. E. Clarke, ‘Praedial Larceny Evil Here.’

³⁹ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 28, 1913, p. 13, Mr. R. E. Clarke, ‘Praedial Larceny Evil Here.’

⁴⁰ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 28, 1913, p. 13, Mr. R. E. Clarke, ‘Praedial Larceny Evil Here.’

received seven days in the Linstead lock-up.⁴¹ The praedial larceny law allowed for the imprisonment of up to three months or whipping for any goods stolen valued at no more than five pounds.⁴² While the sentence in this case was fairly mild, the value of the goods stolen was typical of the period. Most persons stole a few cocoa pods, bananas, or yams and almost no cases included animals or a large amount of goods valued over twenty pounds. The persistence of cases in which judges convicted either women and/or children reinforced the gendered and age dimensions of praedial larceny. Because Jamaican laws forbade the whipping of females, they were more likely to be imprisoned than men. Males, however, above the age of 7 years could be whipped.⁴³

Much of this preoccupation with juvenile offenders and neglected illegitimate children was conjecture rather than a true reflection of crime and destitution in the island. Newspapers reported on court cases, international news, social events and debates in the Jamaican legislature or the English House of Commons. The *Daily Gleaner* published the Annual Report of Prison for perusal by the general public. But within the general statistics in the island very little

⁴¹ *The Daily Gleaner*, November 20, 1916, p. 25, 'Linstead Cases.'

⁴² Later amendments to the Praedial Larceny Law (Law 6 of 1877) allowed judges to use their discretion in sentencing persons for goods valued twenty shillings. Flogging Regulation Law #7 of 1903 allowed the maximum number of strokes for a male adult as 24 and 12 for male juvenile offenders. Noted in *The Daily Gleaner*, July 12, 1917, p. 12 'The Special Midsummer Session of the Legislative Council.'

⁴³ Law 25 of 1904 'Young Criminals Punishment Law'

evidence was available on the numbers of juvenile offenders or destitute children in the island.

Juvenile delinquency throughout the period tended to be limited to particular crimes such as larceny, vagrancy, the violation of several transport and city laws, gambling and praedial larceny. The Jamaican government submitted to the Colonial Office a list of crimes committed by juvenile offenders in 1931, 1932, and 1934; the most comprehensive of these was the 1934 list which included the age, gender, offence and sentence received by the offenders. In 1934, the courts convicted approximately 504 children ranging from as young as 3 years to 15 and half years of age. Of that number, only 18 were girls.⁴⁴ Table Four shows the breakdown of the range of crimes committed by these young offenders. The column 'Other' includes vagrancy, poisoning and several crimes for which the figures were inconsequential.

Table 4: Breakdown of Crimes committed by Juveniles brought before the courts in 1934

Year	Larceny	Praedial Larceny	Wounding	Unlawful Possession of Goods	Other
1934	222	113	63	26	32

⁴⁴ JA 1B/5/77/58 (1934), 'Statistics of all cases of Juvenile Offenders brought before the Courts of the Colony during the year 1934.'

Of these young offenders, 381 received 3,358 lashes (an average of seven lashes per offender) and another 63 were sent to the Industrial School and Reformatory. Included in the list were three children ages three, five, and six years respectively who were all charged with praedial larceny but whose cases were dismissed. In a similar incident, Constable E.H. Barrett brought four-year-old Leonard Brodie to the Kingston Police Court for handling a 'drop-pan ticket.'⁴⁵ The judge dismissed the charges because Brodie had not reached attained the age of seven years. His Honor Mr. Barrows, however, threatened to punish Brodie's father in his stead. Jamaica's legal framework facilitated the sentencing parents for the crime based on the principle that irresponsible parenting led to juvenile criminality. Nonetheless, the mere fact that children of such a young age could be brought before the courts for any crime including praedial larceny suggests that the police very rarely used their discretion in bringing children before the courts. It seems clear that the courts tended to criminalize mischievous behavior such as stone throwing, picking fruits or jumping tramcars. Those successfully convicted faced imprisonment, fines or whipping.

A child's gender determined the kind of punishment he/she received. On the 1935 list of Juvenile offenders, an eleven-year-old girl received lashes in spite

⁴⁵ *The Daily Gleaner*, April 11, 1933, p. 22, 'Man, Just out of Jail, Sent back once more for twelve months.' 'Drop-Pan' was a well-run Chinese run gambling game played in the early twentieth century.

of the fact that such a practice went against the grain of standard legal practices on corporal punishment. In response the Colonial Office surveyed corporal punishment and penal codes in Jamaica as well as the other colonies. Their investigation revealed that all colonies either had a penal code or provisional legislation prohibiting corporal punishment for females. Only in the island of Barbados did the existing Juvenile Offenders Law of 1932 referred to the whipping of offenders without reference to gender.⁴⁶

Two sets of regulations governed criminal proceedings against children and criminal offenders. The schedule of the Young Criminals Punishment Law of 1904 basically dictated that young offenders could be convicted for the participation in as well as aiding and abetting various forms of larceny including praedial larceny. Under the Industrial Schools and Reformatory law, children could also be brought to court for vagrancy, abandonment, or general behavioral issues. The latter legislation allowed for criminal, destitute, orphaned and abandoned children to be sent to the Government Industrial School and Reformatory until the age of sixteen years. Parents or guardians also could present an uncontrollable child to two justices of the peace or a magistrate and request that he/she be admitted to the Reformatory. The Young Criminals Punishment Law, however, allowed the courts to hold parents responsible for the crimes committed by their children. Lawmakers believed that ‘the great majority of the

⁴⁶ BNA CO 137/802/2, ‘Minute Paper.’

little rascals... especially petty and praedial larcenies, would never be brought there if their parents or guardians did not connive at their conduct or fail to look properly after them.’⁴⁷ Because parents benefitted from the crimes of their children, lawmakers felt it necessary to implicate them by forcing them to pay for their children’s fines. Various amendments expanded the reach of these laws through the appointment of officers, creation of rehabilitative centers as well as the types of crimes under which juvenile offenders could be convicted. Although many of these changes mirrored discussions in Britain and the United States, they nonetheless equally reflected changing attitudes towards children as well as concerns about social order in Jamaican society.

At the meeting of the Board of Management of the Jamaican Agricultural Society, members noted that during times of hardship there was a significant increase in praedial larceny. But they felt that it was government’s responsibility to provide initiatives through which juvenile offenders could be trained to be useful citizens rather than habitual criminals.⁴⁸ They advocated the creation of industrial schools in every parish to provide education for ‘neglected juveniles’ or the boarding out of ‘waifs and strays’ to respectable members of the community through the Parochial Boards and the Poor Relief Administration.⁴⁹ Members felt that the breakdown of the family structure was responsible for the abundance of

⁴⁷ JA1B/5/75/46, ‘Report on Law 25 of 1904.’

⁴⁸ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 18, 1917, p. 4, ‘The Agricultural Society and the Crying Evil.’

⁴⁹ ‘The Agricultural Society and the Crying Evil.’

juvenile offenders convicted for the crime. Key in these discussions is the belief that praedial larceny occurred as a result of idleness and social alienation rather than poverty and lack of economic opportunities available to the unskilled labor force.

Other proposals included the creation of Children's Courts for trying children and juvenile offenders. Members of the Board of Visitors of the Government Industrial School located in Stony Hill argued that these courts prevented the association of young offenders with habitual criminals, who were a source of potential social contamination. Furthermore, the public manner in which court cases were conducted prejudiced the future of children who were on trial due to the fact that the courts were crowded with curious spectators.⁵⁰ In response to this suggestion, the Acting Attorney General refuted the argument that children awaiting trial associated with experienced lawbreakers. Children held for trial in Kingston stayed at Sutton Street and, once in court, were given seats in the courtroom or locked in the cells below the court.⁵¹

Furthermore, he felt that the publicity did not have a prejudicial effect on children. He argued that two types of children were brought before courts - those who were considered as criminals and those brought with behavioral issues by their parents. Criminal children, in his opinion, were 'such a hardened batch of

⁵⁰ JA 1B/5/77/118 (1927), 'Secretary, Board of Visitors, Government Industrial School to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, Kingston 23rd July 1927.'

⁵¹ JA 1B/5/77/118 (1927), 'Secretary, Board of Visitors, Government Industrial School to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, Kingston 23rd July 1927.'

young sinners that publicity ha[d] not the slightest effect on them and if let out would straight way go and commit another offence without the slightest compunction.’ He felt that many children thought that being brought to court was a great joke and that in Jamaica, ‘99 out of every 100 people enjoy[ed] going to court.’⁵² The experience failed to deter criminal behavior and lawmakers dismissed the suggestion because they did not think the bill was going to make the slightest difference in improving the morals or behavior of the children.

Much of this discussion, however, took place within the broader context of international debates on juvenile delinquency and reform. In Britain, such discussions referenced the role of the cinema and crime novels as contributing to the rise of juvenile crime in the United Kingdom despite the increase in social clubs and alternate forms of activity available to children and teenagers.⁵³ *The Daily Gleaner* also published perspectives of juvenile delinquency and children offenders in the United States and Canada. Hon. Ben Lindsay, an American judge from Denver, Colorado, visited London to review British treatment of juvenile crime. He contended that ‘children should not be dealt with under criminal law but under chancery law.’⁵⁴ Lindsay felt that the state should act as the guardian, rather than the punisher, of the child and therefore be engaged in understanding

⁵² JA 1B/5/77/118 (1927), ‘Minute Paper.’

⁵³ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 20, 1920, p. 12, ‘Influence of Cinema on the Young’ ; *The Daily Gleaner*, July 10, 1922, p. 8, ‘Juvenile Crime.’

⁵⁴ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 11, 1918, p. 12, ‘The Juvenile: An American Judge Speaks on Children and their Crimes.’

the psychological, physiological and sociological context in which juvenile offenders were forced to exist. He believed that addressing these issues inevitably provided an opportunity to create productive and law abiding citizens.

Theoretically, Jamaican government policy towards juvenile delinquency trended towards prevention of criminal behavior among children rather than the reformation of delinquents. A committee was established in the 1920s to investigate the feasibility of creating a Child Welfare Department with a view of centralizing all efforts focused on the protection and care of children in the island. This included training and apprenticing opportunities for juveniles in the areas of artisan skills for boys and domestic work for girls as well as the creation of an employment registry for juveniles discharged from industrial schools and reformatories throughout the island.⁵⁵ Efforts to institute the department were rejected on the basis that the island lacked the financial capability to invest in such an organization.⁵⁶

Members of the agricultural community as well as letters to the editor, however, emphasized the need for the government to take charge and invest in the development of the rising population by expanding the education system and providing access to industrial education. These efforts, they believed, would benefit the wider community and stem the conversion of neglected juveniles into

⁵⁵ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 1, 1922, p. 10, 'Child Welfare Department.' See also *Minutes of the Legislative Council* 1922.

⁵⁶ JA 1B/5/76/3/224, 'Privy Council Papers for Circulation.'

criminals. Many believed that the government throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries failed to systematically invest in the existing socio-economic development of the colony's youth.⁵⁷ The failure of the state to intervene where the Jamaican family structure had failed, in the proper socialization of the Jamaican child, subjected the wider community to juvenile delinquency. Due to tight economic conditions, however, the government continued to rely on existing institutions and cultural patterns of child rearing to address the issue of juvenile delinquency and destitute children in the island.

Existing facilities for the care of destitute and criminalized children included several orphanages that employed an industrial school education, poor houses, prison facilities and the Government Industrial School and Reformatory, Stony Hill. One of the major concerns of the period was the separation of juvenile offenders from habitual criminals. Prison officials argued that the fundamentals of prison administration required the separation of newcomers from old offenders and the young away from the old. The interaction of both groups led to the 'contamination' and hardening of new comers due to their association with hardened criminals. However, Jamaican prisons were organized according to length of sentence rather than degree of criminality.⁵⁸ Lawmakers limited the institutions dealing with young criminal offenders to the St. Catherine Prison Reformatory and the Government Industrial School. The St. Catherine District

⁵⁷ *The Daily Gleaner*, July 6, 1918, p. 4, H.E. Henderson-Davis 'Open Letter to the Governor.'

⁵⁸ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'Colonial Secretary to the Director of Prisons, 23 March 1937.'

Prison Reformatory, located in Spanish Town, in the early 1900s, housed those boys who were considered by the Stony Hill administration as being inmates with destructive behavioral issues and whose reform required a stricter disciplinary regime. By the First World War, the government ended the practice and sent the boys back to Stony Hill Industrial School as the overall number of unruly boys declined during the period. Both institutions trained boys in agricultural techniques, but Stony Hill included other activities such as tailoring, baking and masonry. Originally created in the late nineteenth century to house both criminal and destitute children, Stony Hill struggled to shake the public perception as an institution for criminal children.

'There is a strong desire to ear-mark and separate the children here into 2 classes as" Orphans, waifs and strays" on the one hand and "Criminals" on the other, the "Wheat and the Tares"...I would therefore ask when does a boy become a criminal? Further what would be his future hope of going out into the world coming from an institution for the reform of Criminal Boys."⁵⁹

The quote referred to the popular notion that criminality was contagious. Association with criminal children inherently placed 'orphans, waifs and strays' in moral danger. In spite of this popular belief, the Stony Hill administration kept both destitute and criminal children housed on the same premises and gave them equal access to educational opportunities. Real differences, however, existed

⁵⁹ JA 1B/5/77/25 (1934), 'James Mair, Superintendent of Government Industrial School to W. Shillingford, Inspector of the Government Industrial School, Dec. 16, 1934'

between children maintained under the Industrial School system and those at the Maxfield Park Home.

Many destitute, abandoned, and orphan children slipped through the cracks of local child rearing institutions and as a result became the responsibility of the parish poor relief administration. The Parochial Boards and General Revenue financed the lives of children placed in Industrial Schools or those who were boarded out. In 1921, lunatics and industrial school children accounted for 30% of total expenditure in poor relief, a figure that excludes monies spent on children boarded out or receiving monies through outdoor relief.⁶⁰ In 1923, for example, 3,150 destitute, deserted and orphan children were on the poor rolls. Of this number, 535 received assistance as independent paupers, 1,895 as dependents (through parents and guardians), 165 lived in poor houses, 101 boarded out and another 456 lived in Industrial Schools.⁶¹ Figures for destitute, abandoned, orphaned children rose considerably over the 1930s. In 1933, for example, 3,611 children received relief through poor relief administration.⁶² By 1937, the figure rose to 4,317 and the overall percentage of child relief to the general expenditure increased from 10.6% in 1933 to 17.0% in 1937. These increases consistently reflected the overall increase in the cost of poor relief in the island. More

⁶⁰ Annual Report of the Board of Supervision 1920 – 1921 in *The Annual Reports of Jamaica 1920 – 1921* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1922)

⁶¹ Annual Report of the Board of Supervision 1923 – 1924 in *The Annual Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports 1923 – 1924* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1926)

⁶² Annual Report of the Board of Supervision 1933 and 1937 in *Annual Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1934 and 1938)

importantly, however, industrial school children were only a small percent of the number of children on relief averaging anywhere from 500 in 1933 to 800 in 1938. In fact the figures from the Alpha Home show that of the 214 boys admitted between 1933 and 1937, 136 were classified as being destitute while 56 were admitted with behavioral issues.⁶³ These figures suggest that destitute, and possibly displaced children, rather than criminal children were the norm for Jamaican society in the period.

An extensive informal adoption system supplemented existing child rearing practices in Jamaica. Very often children whose parents had migrated, died, or were abandoned, orphaned and destitute, were incorporated into ‘foster families.’ These children provided labor in the home and on farms in exchange for food and shelter.⁶⁴ In the most ideal situations, adoptive families provided children with a strong educational base or a skill. Generally, however, many families lacked the capacity to provide properly for their own children much less those that were adopted. Though less well documented, this informal adoption system also existed within the urban areas.

Central government as well as local administrations refrained from regulating and intervening in local adoption practices. In fact parochial boards often

⁶³ Compiled from the admittance records located at the Alpha Boys Home, Kingston Jamaica.

⁶⁴ Several historians and anthropologists have investigated this phenomenon in the Caribbean including Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880 – 1902: Race, Class and Social Control* (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad: University of the West Indies, 2000); Christine Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives* (Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996)

replicated informal practices of the boarding or loaning out of the destitute and abandoned children in their care. Such practices occurred because local boards became the ‘legally constituted guardians of pauper children’ once a child entered the Poor Relief system through the Inspector of Poor, Church or the Judicial systems.⁶⁵ Board of Supervision regulations during the early twentieth century considered Poor Houses unsuitable for the care of children. But if a child was boarded out, Parochial Boards incurred extra costs for their education, nutrition and basic necessities. The quality of education as well as life as a whole depended on where children were placed. If they were attached to Alpha Home for Boys and Girls, Hope, and Stony Hill Industrial schools, then those children acquired an industrial type education. The Education Department regulated and inspected these institutions on a regular basis. In contrast, however, the K.S.A.C. managed the Maxfield Park Children’s Home. A child attached to the Maxfield Park Children’s Home was more likely to be loaned out for six months at a time as domestics and workers to families who were expected to feed, clothe and educate them. Comparatively, children from Alpha and Stony Hill more closely regulated under the licensing system where they would receive training from ‘respectable families’ or businesses on twelve-month contracts.

The Poor Relief Committee of the K.S.A.C. in 1924 sanctioned the farming out of children of the Maxfield Park Children’s Home as domestics and laborers

⁶⁵ Annual Report for the Board of Supervision 1918 – 1919 in *The Annual Reports of Jamaica 1918-1919* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1920) 177 – 193, p. 179

to the wider community. Councilor Dillon, seconded by Alderman Farrier, agreed that ‘certain boys and girls should be sent out to service [and] an advertisement be sent to the Gleaner offering’ six boys and two girls ‘as domestic servants.’⁶⁶ Applicants sent their requests to the Master of the Corporation Poor House along with recommendations from a Justice of the Peace or a Minister of Religion. The committee expected successful applicants to feed, house and clothe children for six months. No mention was made of providing education and access to health services in the earlier days of the program.⁶⁷ Very often applicants received recommendations from well-connected members of society. For example, Mr. J.P. Steele, a blacksmith, who had a recommendation from the Mayor of Kingston, when he requested a boy of about 14 years of age to be boarded out to him.⁶⁸ Such practices at the Maxfield Park Home reflected state approval of a cultural practice that in many ways promoted the exploitation of children through child labor. While the notion of boarding out children was not particular to Jamaica, conditions at the Maxfield Park Home were extreme in comparison to the contemporary practices at the Government Industrial School and Alpha Home.

⁶⁶ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1925) Minutes and Report of the Pauper Committee, Kingston, June 14, 1924

⁶⁷ JA 2/6/171 (1923 – 1925) Minutes and Report of the Pauper Committee, Kingston, June 14, 1924

⁶⁸ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, August 29, 1928

There were times, however, when the board used its discretion in dealing with repeat requests for children. Of special reference here is the case of Mrs. Clarke:

Mrs. Clarke had previously been granted a girl from the Home, but had been disappointed with her....The Committee recommends that the applicant be informed that in view of the dissatisfaction expressed with regard to the child already given, the council is unable to entertain the application for another child.⁶⁹

Incomplete applications or poor recommendations were among the chief reasons for rejecting applicants. Other persons returned children due to incompatibility or behavioral issues, as in the case of M. E. Berdge who had returned William Cohen because he proved unsuitable. In another case, Mrs. Margaret Samuels requested permission to return Beatrice White to Maxfield Park on the grounds that she could not control her. Beatrice White's case was referred to the Inspector of Poor.⁷⁰ Because the Committee very rarely rejected applications, Mrs. Clarke seemed to have been a special case. Apparently finding Mrs. Clarke's position to be unreasonable, the Committee opted not to board out another child with her.

It seems, however, that children also decided whether or not they wanted to remain in the homes of the 'respectable families' with whom they boarded. They often took matters into their own hands by absconding. Sarah Hamilton absconded in December 1928 from the home of Mrs. J Simms with whom she

⁶⁹ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, Sept. 3, 1930

⁷⁰ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, November 7, 1928

was boarding.⁷¹ H.B. Priestly and Macy Anne Dickens reported to the Corporation Committee that a girl Elizabeth Willis and a boy Hezekiah Johnson had absconded in May of 1929.⁷² Both matters were referred to the police. Mr. G. W. Cooper also reported that Gertrude Gray, a child who boarded with him, had absconded in November 1928. In this particular instance, the Master of the Poor House, Mr. Cresser, found Gertrude at the house of a washer employed at Maxfield Park. He concluded that the washer inveigled the child to run away from Mr. Cooper's residence. The committee dismissed the washer from her position at the home. Throughout the correspondence, committee members failed to express concern about placing young girls under fourteen years of age with men or the conditions under which children of both genders worked. Generally, the board relied on the Inspector of the Poor to investigate the conditions under which children lived and worked. Only one incident occurred, however, where the Inspector of the Poor felt that a child should be returned to the home due to inadequate treatment

'The Inspector of the Poor reported...that a child Alice Hutchinson, who was with Mrs. A Notice at no. 29 Gold Street was not receiving the necessary care and attention. The Committee recommend that in view of the Inspector of the Poor's report, the

⁷¹ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, December 12, 1928

⁷² JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, May 29, 1929

child shall be returned ... and then sent back to Maxfield Park being still under 14 years of age'⁷³

Mrs. Notice, however, refused to return Alice to the Home and as a result the Chairman advised the Inspector to use the proper means to recover the child.⁷⁴

Alice eventually returned to Maxfield Park. In another incident, Thelma Smith Tennant, who boarded with Mrs. Bryant, ran away to her grandmother's house. Frances Johnson, her grandmother, reported the incident to the committee, who in turn, decided that Thelma be allowed to remain with her grandmother.⁷⁵ Ms. Johnson's experience, however, was atypical of the period.

Records revealed that board members were generally reticent about allowing children to return to their extended family members. It was easier to apply for a child or to adopt one. Requests for children to be boarded out required only a recommendation from a JP or Minister of Religion. Many men and women applied for children from the Maxfield Park Home and in some instances, management allowed approved applicants to select the child they wanted. In 1929, the Poor Relief Committee allowed Mr. Malabre to choose the child he wanted; if he/she were less than fourteen years, then Malabre was required to send

⁷³ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, July 4, 1928

⁷⁴ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, July 25, 1928

⁷⁵ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, February 27, 1929

him/her to school.⁷⁶ Yet, in the case of Mrs. Levy, from Port Antonio in Portland, the committee required her to provide a sworn affidavit of affiliation stating that she was the grand aunt of Evadne Naylor. They also required her to offer proof that she could afford to care for the child.⁷⁷ In contrast, Mrs. I.F. Black wrote a letter to the board expressing her desire to adopt 11-month-old Ruby Grant as her own.

"Read a letter from Mrs. I.F. Clack dated 9/3/29 expressing her desire to adopt as her own. Ruby Grant an infant 11 months old...previously left at the city crèche by an individual who had never returned. [She is] also asking that the child be given in such a way that she could not be deprived of it by anyone who may turn up later' The Committee recommends that the child be given ... on the same grounds that the Corporation now possess it, if she so desires."⁷⁸

Her application was successful. Many of the children attached to the Maxfield Park Home were admitted because they were abandoned, destitute, orphaned or lacked parental supervision and guidance. Their families lacked the capacity to support them. Members believed that those persons who wished to adopt a child or board out children already had the means to maintain and raise a child. It made sense, therefore, to facilitate more respectable members of society and by extension, provide these children with the opportunity to be socialized by

⁷⁶ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, March 13, 1929

⁷⁷ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, July 25, 1928

⁷⁸ JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Poor House Committee, Kingston, March 13, 1929

upstanding citizens rather than their own families. The K.S.A.C maintained its commitment to boarding as a tool for socializing and educating inmates of the institution until 1935 when committee members convened a special enquiry into the possibility of adopting a similar education curriculum to that of the Government Industrial School in Stony Hill. No real change occurred in the lives of the inmates, however, as the Corporation was unable to finance such a venture in the foreseeable future.

Comparatively, children from the Maxfield Park Home experienced a poorer quality of life than those attached to other institutions. Children admitted to the home were governed by rules associated with Poor Relief under which children were taken off the rolls at age fourteen. The KSAC administration, therefore, discharged children at the age of 14 years at their own recognizance. Children placed at the Industrial Schools officially received relief until age sixteen; but it was possible to stay until age eighteen so as to increase or improve one's training before being released. The Poor Law made no provision for children who independently received relief. Mr. Ferguson, Inspector of Poor for Kingston argued in relation to Maxfield Park Children that

... a child, like an aged person, is physically unable to earn the means of subsistence. The one from youthfulness, the other from old age and until such disability is removed... [he/she] is entitled to relief... a child at 14 years needs every assistance while being equipped to earn the means of his support...I am of the opinion that... one age limit should apply to all.

He believed that the rules governing the lives of children at the Maxfield Home had to be reevaluated so as to provide the children with the necessary skills to survive. Ferguson recognized that children in industrial schools had greater access to skills training than those children granted outdoor relief. He believed that it was in the best interest of pauper children to treat them along the same lines as those admitted to industrial schools. The views of Mr. Ferguson reflected ongoing local, regional, and international discussions about training children by providing them with the adequate skills that would encourage them to be productive citizens. Prior to 1932, very little arrangements were made to provide children at Maxfield Park Children's Home with structure outside of the basic requirements of education, healthcare, and nutrition until they attained fourteen years of age.

Contemporary observers unfamiliar with Caribbean societies could easily identify such practices as child abuse. However, contemporaneous laws only protected children from physical abuse or inadequate supervision that resulted in the physical harm of children.⁷⁹ Law 9 of 1896, 'The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Law,' based entirely on British legislation, reflected a change in British attitudes rather than Jamaican attitudes to children. Nonetheless it was instituted despite the fact that the country lacked the infrastructure to maintain institutions

⁷⁹ Law 9 of 1896 'The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Law' specifically refers to 'any person over the age of 16 years who has custody, charge, or care of any child under the age of sixteen years willfully assaults, ill-treated, neglected, abandons, or exposes such child, or cause such child to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed in a manner likely to cause child unnecessary suffering, or injury to its health.' This law designates poor houses, police stations and hospitals as places of safety for children identified as being abused.

such as places of safety and foster homes that the legal system required.⁸⁰ An assessment of the effectiveness of Jamaican laws in regards to dealing with children revealed that while the legislative structure existed, the government failed to provide the actual infrastructure to care for children in need.

‘It is true to say that our legislation has followed very closely to that of English Law especially in regard to sexual crimes against children...and also in regard to the prevention of cruelty and the provision ...of a system for securing the protection and safe-keeping and up-bringing of children...It appears however that these laws are more in want of use than of amendment.’⁸¹

The Jamaican legislation failed to regulate children’s sexuality with respect to issues of incest and carnal abuse in the way early twentieth century British Legislation did. The lack of facilities to train and protect wards of state was very clearly reflected in the practices of the Maxfield Park Children’s Home. Children, especially female, seemed more susceptible to physical and sexual abuse if attached to the Maxfield Park Children’s Home as opposed to the Government Industrial School in Stony, Alpha Boy’s and Girl’s Schools, and the Juvenile Reformatory attached to the St. Catherine District Prison. As was the case of Flassie Hall, the committee maintained very little control over the movement of ‘boarded out’ children. The committee originally granted Mrs. K.S.E. Davis permission to have Flassie Hall board with her. Sometime afterwards, Mrs. Davis moved from Kingston to Bog Walk, St. Catherine, in the process taking the child

⁸⁰ JA 1B/5/75/25 ‘Report on Law 9 of 1896 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Law, April 8, 1896’

⁸¹ JA 1B/5/77/58 (1934) *Memorandum on the Existing Special Legislation in Jamaica as to Children with Comparative Reference to English Law*, 1.

out of the jurisdiction of the K.S.A.C as well as the Inspector of Poor for Kingston. Members became aware of the problem only when Mrs. Davis made a second application for a young boy to work with her. They denied her application as regulations forbade the removal of children associated with Maxfield Park from the Corporate Area. Instead of requesting the return of Flassie Hall, the board asked that the child be brought in for examination so that they could attest to the child's condition.⁸² The focus here was the child's physical condition rather than general concern about conditions under which Flassie lived and worked. Such practices reflected the failure on the part of the K.S.A.C to engage in a systematic program of reform and education similar to that developed in the few industrial schools in the island. Rather, they seemed to consider the institution a holding ground for abandoned and destitute children until they came of age.

Conclusion

Fears of a juvenile criminal class permeated newspaper correspondence and official documents throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Jamaican elite blamed the breakdown of the Jamaican family, illegitimacy, and poverty as the underlying cause for the creation of an uncontrollable juvenile population. Members of the elite called for tighter legislation to control illegitimacy and to force parents, especially mothers, to bear responsibility for their ill-supervised progeny. Failure to supervise and guide laboring class children

⁸² JA 2/6/172 (1928 – 1930) Minutes of the Managing Committee of the Corporation Poor House, Kingston, May 29, 1929

resulted in their exposure to habitual criminals. The elite believed that such exposure corrupted children thereby making them unproductive members of society. The records of the Board of Supervision, however, did not support much of this concern over juvenile delinquency. Destitute, orphaned, and displaced rather than criminal children depended heavily on the state for their security and support.

The Jamaican colonial administration relied on existing infrastructure such as industrial schools, poor relief institutions and prison facilities to care for dependent children. Financial disabilities made it difficult for the government to institute child welfare and reform policies similar to those in the United States and Britain. Institutions, therefore, like the Maxfield Park Children's Home used 'boarding out' as a cheaper alternative to investing in educational programs similar to those instituted in government and private industrial schools. The Poor House Committee of the K.S.A.C believed that boarding children out to respectable members of society provided them with better social and economic opportunities than if they remained at the home. By working as domestics and gardeners in the homes of the middle classes and elite, children acquired social skills through cohabitation. In light of this position, committee members failed to take any real precautions to protect the children against overwork, physical and sexual abuse. The children, however, took matters into their own hands by running away and returning to relatives and other familiar persons in their lives.

‘Boarding out’ as a tool of social reform seemed to have failed to uplift children in the Maxfield Park Home. By the late 1930s, the Committee opted to consider industrial school education as a better solution for providing inmates with the tools to survive in Jamaican society. This shift from ‘boarding-out’ to implementing an industrial school education reflected a general change in society about the role of children in the future of the nation. Children were key to the future prosperity of the nation. The goal of an industrial school education, therefore, was to create good colonial citizens. Chapter four examines the structure and administration of Industrial Schools in Jamaica and their role in training criminal, destitute, orphaned children to be good colonial citizens.

Chapter Four

“A happier Jamaica lies ahead”*: Educating Waifs and Strays in Industrial Schools and Orphanages in Early Twentieth Century Jamaica

By the end of the 19th century, the Jamaican colonial government along with several religious institutions established a small network of Industrial Schools and a Reformatory that housed criminal, destitute, and displaced juveniles. Many of the inmates entered the industrial school system through the courts, poor relief or by the parochial boards. In the twentieth century, a few parents had their children admitted to these institutions as a result of behavioral issues. Each of these institutions doubled as a school and a home. Children lived onsite, attended school, worked in the fields, and helped to maintain the general infrastructure of the schools. These institutions also took in work from the general public in part to improve the practical aspect of the children’s training as well as to promote self-sufficiency in the institution.

Key to the re-socialization of industrial school children was the promotion of ideas such as self-sufficiency, loyalty, and obedience. Through perseverance and hard work as well as adherence to class and social norms of respectability, these displaced delinquent and destitute children could become successful

* Section of Title taken from *Daily Gleaner* June 22, 1889 ‘Government Aid to Industrial Training’

farmers, artisans, mothers and fathers. Weekly attendance at church, educational and athletic activities and competitions provided inmates with a sense of community and a general respect for authority, rules and regulations. It was hoped that the inculcation of loyalty through the promotion of group activities would eventually produce law-abiding citizens.¹ More importantly, achieving success through hard work would promote self-sufficiency. A successful industrial school, therefore, would produce disciplined, productive and amenable colonial citizens.

This ongoing discourse on citizenship included colonial officers, government officials, school administrators as well as the public. Citizenship, as defined here, did not refer to responsible political participation. Instead it was a more nuanced discussion about social responsibility and belonging. In light of contemporary political practices, the laboring population could not be considered citizens in the true sense of the word. Rather, the ascribed notion of citizenship emphasized productivity, amenability as well as respect for law and authority. Key to this discourse was the notion of ‘respectability,’ in which tangible representations of established gender norms and societal values such as creating nuclear family provided a mode of transportation for social mobility. The propagation of the nuclear family was essential because fathers as breadwinners were also symbols of authority, law and order. Mothers as caretakers reinforced the values of society through their interaction with their progeny.

¹ JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934), ‘Extract from Report of Committee appointed by the Government to advise on Industrial Work at Stony Hill.’

‘...Children will under suitable influences become a valuable asset for the State while if neglected and uneducated, they run the risk of becoming criminals and paupers and of continuing to be a burden to the community.’²

Industrial schools, therefore, served as spaces of re-acculturation based on the belief that children entering these schools came from dysfunctional and unstable family situations. Earlier learned behavior patterns had to be dispensed with and children inculcated with new core values that emphasized hard work, thrift and respect for civil society. A successful industrial school, therefore, produced children who were assets rather than burdens to the society at large.

By the early twentieth century, the Jamaican colonial administration as well as the public expressed increasing concern about the welfare of juvenile delinquents, waifs and strays in the island. Increased calls for industrial schools permeated public and administrative correspondence.³ In 1930, Rev. H. H. Simpson, Secretary of Jamaica Agricultural Society in St. Mary at the general meeting argued

‘The foremost need of our country to-day is one or two industrial schools to every rural parish where cheap or even free agricultural and handcraft education will be given. Instead of teaching a boy to stick a pen behind his ear and his hands in his pockets...teach him to toil with fork and spade and plane and saw and pruning knife and budding tape...teach him to respect and not to despise honest toil and a happier Jamaica lies ahead of us.’⁴

² Report of the Board of Supervision for the year ended 31st March, 1910 in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1909 – 1910* (Jamaica: Government Printing Press, 1912) p. 418.

³ *The Daily Gleaner*, June 22, 1889, ‘Government Aid to Industrial Training.’

⁴ *The Daily Gleaner*, December 5, 1930, p. 27, ‘St. Mary J.A.S Branches meet.’

Members of the agricultural community specifically identified industrial schools as the remedy for juvenile delinquency. Throughout the article, Simpson, reiterated the notion that the devil found work for idle hands. If Jamaican youth were not taught to respect hard work and industry, the future of the island was gloomy at best. The emphasis on industrial schools as opposed to reformatories reflected a general focus on social reform through education and skills training. Public discourse, in the nineteenth century, concentrated on a punitive response to juvenile delinquency. However in the early twentieth century, this shifted to emphasize one's ability to mold and guide children in the way they should go.

An industrial school, theoretically distinct from a reformatory, presented a viable alternative to sending young children to prison. As a preventative measure, such institutions allowed for the removal of children from the streets before they came under the influence of the criminal elements of society.⁵ Calls, therefore, for industrial schools as well as the implementation of industrial education suggested the need for a more systematic approach to child welfare in the colony. It was hoped that investment in the early prevention of criminal behavior would eventually save the government money from having to invest in larger prisons and maintaining the justice system.⁶

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the cost of maintenance of children in industrial schools was borne by the parochial boards

⁵ *The Daily Gleaner*, February 21, 1895, 'Hon. Legislative Council.'

⁶ *The Daily Gleaner*, February 21, 1895, 'Hon. Legislative Council.'

through the poor rates. Only children sentenced to the Government Reformatory for petty crimes were maintained from the general revenue. Comparatively in England and the United States, the government assumed financial responsibility for similar institutions. Colonial administrators continuously referenced England and the United States child welfare policies as ideal systems to replicate when attempting to improve existing infrastructure. Furthermore, the use of general revenue to maintain industrial schools signaled to the wider public a long-term commitment to improving the quality of Jamaican colonial citizens emerging from the ‘non-respectable’ laboring classes.⁷ In reality, however, parochial boards bore the cost of maintaining the ‘waifs and strays’ in industrial schools in the period under review. The lack of funding not only threatened the viability of the industrial school system but also deterred the creation of a systematic child welfare policy in the early twentieth century in Jamaica.

The colonial administration as well as members of the public identified several problems that negatively affected the lives of children in the colony. Issues such as lowering infant mortality, organizing an apprenticeship system, creating juvenile courts as well as the use of ‘guardians’ to monitor children in the judicial system and industrial schools required constant communication and collaboration between government and philanthropic organizations. By 1922, administrators argued that there was a need for a Child Welfare Board that would

⁷ *The Daily Gleaner*, February 21, 1895, ‘Hon. Legislative Council.’

house and systematize all programs associated with the care of children.⁸ More importantly, the creation of a child welfare board demanded funding and qualified personnel. Lack of funding, however, caused this plan to be shelved for the time being. In response, administrators turned their focus to semantics – the distinction between reformatories and industrial schools.

Children admitted to industrial schools and reformatories generally came from the laboring classes. Initially, the purpose of both types of institutions was to re-socialize inmates so as to make them productive and useful citizens through skills training and by exposing them to lectures, fairs and educational events. Such exposure, it was hoped, would offset their earlier socialization as administrators considered these children tainted by their interaction with the laboring class. In Jamaica, however, the reformatories preceded the creation of industrial schools. The government established the country's first reformatory at Stony Hill in 1869 and by the 1870s placed it under the portfolio of the Director of Prisons where it remained until the late 1930s. Early in its existence, therefore, the Government Reformatory came to be perceived by the general public as a modified prison and its young inmates as criminals. In the 1890s the legislature amended the Industrial Schools and Reformatories Act to facilitate the creation of privately run industrial schools. As a result, industrial schools were considered to be more wholesome institutions created as safe havens to care, educate and

⁸ *The Daily Gleaner*, May 1, 1922, 'Child Welfare Department.'

protect ‘waifs’ and ‘strays.’ In response to these perceptions, the government renamed the institution ‘Government Industrial School’ by the early twentieth century so as to remove the stigma of criminalization. The children, however, continued to be identified as inmates rather than students, both within colonial correspondence and newspapers, thereby signaling the retention of aspects of its penal heritage.

A key part of an industrial school curriculum was the preference of an industrial education over the standard program of the three R’s – reading, writing and arithmetic. It is important to note that the main distinction in Jamaica between an industrial school and industrial education was that the former provided an opportunity to engage in a more holistic approach to juvenile rehabilitation. In contrast, aspects of an industrial based curriculum could be introduced into a school’s curriculum. Orphanages, where possible, attempted to incorporate industrial education within their general curriculum but with less intensity. Many believed that industrial schools offered better quality of education than the existing elementary education system because it provided children with greater opportunity to be trained in vocations. However, industrial schools in Jamaica evolved out of the reformatory system and this heritage stigmatized children who left these institutions in the early twentieth century.

Several challenges deterred the expansion of an industrial school system in Jamaica. Limited access to adequate financial and human resources impaired the

growth and development of industrial schools in Jamaica. Throughout the twentieth century, the colonial administration failed to systematically invest in the care and education of displaced, orphaned, and ‘criminal’ children. Very few of the designated industrial schools had adequate facilities to properly educate and protect their students. Many of the children entering these schools were of poor health or completely illiterate, thereby making it more difficult for school administrators to fulfill their original role of reforming their inmates. Caretakers, therefore, were forced to bring the children on par with the average child in elementary school while at the same time provide them with the necessary vocational skills training. The success of this operation depended on the age at which children entered the institution. All industrial and reformatory school children left these institutions at the age of sixteen years unless the governor, at the request of the superintendent, extended their stay until age eighteen. The earlier a child entered the industrial school system the more successful the process of reformation once they left the institution. Financial insecurity, inadequate facilities, as well as a general lack of trained personnel to guide children through their education meant that school administrators lived under the constant threat of debt, closure, or mergers with other institutions.

Throughout the early twentieth century, school administrators constantly wrestled with the question of whether or not industrial schools were successful in their mission of reforming inmates and producing productive and responsible

colonial citizens. One of the greatest failures of the industrial school network was its inability to keep track of the progress of inmates after they had left the institution. These institutions lacked the infrastructure to actually trace the successes and possible failures of former residents. As a result, caretakers had no way to prove that these institutions were useful and that they were achieving their purpose of reforming delinquents, waifs and strays. Assumptions about the character of former inmates littered official correspondence while school administrators expressed constant concern about the inability to protect and guide former inmates after their tenure. Despite these challenges, the official discourse on industrial schools and orphanages suggested that administrators saw a difference between the general delinquent juvenile population and children in homes and institutions. Each investment in a child within the industrial school and orphanage circuit represented a potential productive citizen. As such the underlying concern of administrators was whether or not they were effectively disseminating the virtues of the ideal Jamaican colonial citizen to the laboring classes through their children. Inherently, these institutions were pilot projects in citizenship.

Reformatories and Industrial Schools in the late 19th century

The colony inherited the idea of an industrial education from Britain. Initially tied to the reformatory movement, industrial schools served as safe

spaces to house and educate juvenile paupers and delinquents. Many of these children were victims of the ‘rapid urbanization and industrialization’ in the 19th century that disrupted traditional social and familial networks.⁹ These dislocated children were highly visible because they often eked out a living on the streets and back alleys of urban centers. Their needs as well as their misdeeds could not be effectively addressed in the existing penal and social service institutions. Reformatories, and much later, Borstal institutions and youth clubs, became useful spaces to rehabilitate delinquent and destitute children so that in adulthood they would be useful citizens. Jamaica adopted the Industrial Schools Act in 1858, several years after it had been passed in Britain. By the late 1890s, Britain also encouraged social reform through the creation of clubs and youth societies along with institutional reform in an attempt to arrest criminal behavior among youths. In Jamaica, however, industrial school development fluctuated. Both in the 1890s and 1920s, the industrial school network expanded. But in the early 1900s and 1930s, the system contracted as a result of school closures and mergers due to financial insecurity. In spite of these setbacks, many members of the public deemed these institutions as essential to reforming children associated with the ‘criminal classes.’

Many elementary schools attempted to incorporate some practical agricultural training into the school curriculum by establishing school garden

⁹ Christina Twomey, ‘Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State: Victoria’s 1864 neglected and Criminal Children’s Act’ *Labour History* No. 73 (Nov 1997) 169 – 186, p. 176.

plots for the students.¹⁰ In contrast, industrial schools offered a more diverse vocational curriculum organized along gendered lines. Boys learned masonry, blacksmithy, carpentry, baking, tailoring and general agricultural pursuits. Such training hopefully would make it financially viable for them to take on the role of being the main breadwinner for their families. The training of female inmates, however, was limited to baking, sewing and laundry. When their terms ended, these girls would be fully equipped to become domestic workers, laundresses and mothers. A system of licensing, as a form of apprenticeship, provided limited opportunities for a small number of inmates to work with a 'respectable' family, merchants, blacksmiths, carpenters and other artisans. The licensing system, however, was not considered very successful as children were sometimes sent back to the institution because they were deemed unsuitable for the posts they occupied. Nonetheless, many hoped that this gender-oriented education would eventually improve the quality of family life and stem the tide of illegitimacy and the juvenile criminals that it supposedly produced.

The Jamaican industrial school circuit, however, housed only a small number of children. For example, the Government Reformatory, which existed as the only institution capable of housing children entering the penal system under the Industrial Schools and Reformatories Act. Yet no more than 350 children

¹⁰ Enos Nuttall, 'A paper on Education in Jamaica in its relation to skilled handicraft and agricultural work, written at the request of, and for publication by, the board of in England' (n.p. July 1902).

stayed at the institution during its early years. This was a small fraction of the estimated population of 146,934 children between the ages of five and sixteen years.¹¹

By 1890, the government established the Hope Industrial School for boys on the lands of the Hope Botanical Gardens in St. Andrew. Twenty-five non-criminal inmates were transferred from the Government Reformatory and Industrial School in Stony Hill, to help start the school.¹² The school's curriculum placed a great emphasis on agricultural training. Eventually, the school became aligned with the Public Gardens and Plantation Department.¹³ In doing so, the administrators hoped to provide the inmates 'with as thorough an Agricultural training as possible.'¹⁴ They inherited their rules and regulations from the Reformatory in Stony Hill.

In the 1880s, a system of rewards was introduced in the Government Reformatory in an effort to motivate children to be on their best behavior.¹⁵ Under this system, the children earned a small amount of money for good behavior,

¹¹ G.W. Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 62.

¹² Report on Industrial Schools for the year ending 31st March 1893 in *The Governor's Report on the Blue Book and Departmental Reports 1892 – 93* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment, 1894).

¹³ JA 1B/5/76/3/190, 'Enclosure to Message from His Excellency the Governor to the Honourable the Members of the Legislative Council date 11th February 1909.' Hope Industrial School was closed in 1910 but eventually reopened to become the première agricultural school in the island. By the mid-twentieth century, its name was changed to the College of Agricultural Science Education and the actual institution was moved to the parish of Portland.

¹⁴ Report on Industrial Schools, 1892 – 93, p. 284

¹⁵ BNA CO 137/508/6, 'Report on the Government Reformatory for Boys and Girls for the year ended 31st December 1882.'

which would be awarded to them at the end of their time at the institution. Bad behavior or destruction of property resulted in deductions from their rewards in addition to the standard corporal punishment given for bad behavior. The Hope School replicated this program and, by 1904, arrangements were made for the inmates to lodge their reward money in the Government Savings Bank. This practice had a three-fold purpose of providing incentive for good behavior, teaching inmates the importance of thrift, and providing them with some security at the end of their tenure at the institution.¹⁶ The Hope Industrial School eventually closed in 1910 due to the high cost of maintenance.¹⁷ At no point during its existence did the institution attain maximum capacity and, as a result, the remaining boys were transferred to the reformatory at Stony Hill.

In 1892, the Shortwood Industrial School for Girls was established on the grounds of the Shortwood Training School. The founders modeled the school curriculum along the same lines of the Government Reformatory for Girls, which at the time was located across from the Union Poor House in Admiral's Pen, Kingston.¹⁸ Their training emphasized house cleaning, baking and sewing. Similarly, the Alpha Cottage for Girls and Boys as well as the Belmont

¹⁶ Report on Industrial Schools 1904 – 1905 in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1904 – 1905* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment) p. 62.

¹⁷ JA 1B/5/76/3/190, 'Draft correspondence to the Director of Public Works 7th November 1908.'

¹⁸ The government moved the female inmates from Stony Hill, in 1885, on the recommendation of Thomas Mair, the Superintendent. He argued that the girls did not receive as much attention as the boys. It was therefore necessary to separate them so that they could receive much more attention and mentoring from a visiting committee of women. It eventually returned to Stony Hill in 1899 and remained there until it closed in 1937.

Orphanage, established by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Church respectively in the 1890s, attempted to provide children with a comprehensive education. A key element of this philosophy was to provide these children with practical skills so as to ensure that they had the tools to be self-sufficient at the end of their terms. Inmates, therefore, maintained the general appearance of the institution, engaging in gardening, basket making, and other income earning activities to supplement subventions from the government. During the holidays, boys from Hope Industrial School joined the girls at Shortwood or the children at Belmont for an evening of festivities. The best behaved children of each institution often got the opportunity to attend lantern slide shows, concerts and public lectures.

During the 1890s, the government encouraged the use of the term industrial school over reformatory in an attempt to remove the stigma associated with being in a reformatory. Ideally providing a more disciplinary regime that was geared towards controlling every movement of the inmates, a reformatory was thus perceived as a modified prison system. Industrial schools, arguably, were considered glorified orphanages providing a diverse educational curriculum for 'waifs and strays.' Reformatories fell under the portfolio of the Director of Prisons, while the Inspector of Industrial Schools attached to the Department of Education monitored the industrial schools. The government also included all the industrial schools in a singular report, separate from that of the reformatories. No real difference existed in the curriculum of reformatories and industrial schools;

however, the inmates of the latter entered the institutions as displaced children, paupers or orphans. Children entered the reformatory through the courts rather than the parochial boards or poor relief. Due to the paucity of spaces available, however, children of all backgrounds coexisted in these institutions. For example, the Belmont Orphanage was built to accommodate twelve children ranging from as young as one year old to sixteen years. Yet any child residing at Belmont, Hope, Shortwood or Alpha industrial schools who was viewed as a troublemaker could be transferred to the Government Reformatory in Stony Hill on the basis that life in the government reformatory was more restrictive and regimented.

Eventually, in 1910, the government established the St. Catherine District Prison Juvenile Reformatory to house the most intractable boys in the system. As early as 1911, the most difficult boys from Stony Hill were transferred, by order of the Governor, to the juvenile branch of the St. Catherine District Prison.¹⁹ Such a move signaled to the boys as well as the administration that the former were deemed incapable of reform. Although the government established the reformatory on the same grounds as the St. Catherine District Prison, it treated them as two separate institutions. This practice continued to reinforce local perceptions that inmates attached to either Stony Hill or St. Catherine Reformatory were prisoners rather than inmates in remedial institutions. By World War I, the number of boys sent to the juvenile reformatory dwindled and

¹⁹ JA 1B/5/76/231, 'Minute 20th December 1911.'

the government decided that the institution no longer fulfilled its initial purpose. Officials reconstituted this institution as a remand centre for juvenile – adults (persons between the age of 16 and 21) and modeled it along the lines of the Borstal system in London.²⁰

In 1910, the Board of Agriculture proposed the closure of the Hope Industrial School on the basis that the school had failed to achieve the goals of its founders.²¹ Hon. H.H. Cousins, Director of the Board of Education, upon inspecting the school prior to 1910, found the industrial work in the gardens unsatisfactory. Furthermore, there was gross mismanagement of stocks, and the diet of the boys was inadequate. After consulting with Mr. Thomas Mair, Superintendent of the Government School in Stony Hill, they agreed that it would be better to transfer the boys to the government school where they would be better fed and educated. The superintendent agreed to accept the children as long as better facilities were made for the reformatory that housed the girls at the institution. Mr. Mair complained that he had great trouble preventing philandering as a result of the ‘close proximity of the sexes.’²² Despite this deterring factor, it was felt that the boys would have a much better quality of life and education

²⁰ JA 1B/5/76/3/383, ‘L.S. Amery to Sir Leslie Probyn, Governor of Jamaica 10th February 1920.’ This file contains general enquiries into the Borstal system but the government never actually attempted to replicate the system, on a large scale, due to financial constraints.

²¹ JA 1B/5/76/3/190, ‘Resolution to be served by the Honourable H.H. Cousins.’

²² JA 1B/5/76/3/190, ‘Resolution to be moved by the Honourable H.H. Cousins.’

under the management of Mr. Mair rather than what they experienced on the premises of the Hope Industrial School.

Similarly, in 1916, the government closed the Shortwood Industrial School due to low occupancy and high cost of maintenance. Though originally a girls' school, administrators opened up the institution in the early 1900s to accept young boys until the age of eight years when they would then be transferred to Hope and, after 1910, to Alpha. Belmont was eventually closed for similar reasons in 1924. The remaining boys and girls were transferred to Government Industrial School. Caretakers, however, suggested that the closure was due to the fact that most of the children admitted were 'quite below the class for whom the home was originally intended.'²³ This position suggested that the children entering the institution in its earlier years were the progeny of the more respectable laboring and middle classes. Possibly, by the 1920s, the system had become so overcrowded that children were randomly sent to industrial schools despite the original mandate of these institutions. The system, however, tried to place children in institutions that reflected their religious orientation. But the Government Industrial School was non-denominational and housed all children regardless of religious orientation. For example, boys from Hope Industrial were transferred to Alpha on the basis that the children were Catholic. Similar transfers were also made to Belmont Orphanage during the late nineteenth century.

²³ Report on Industrial Schools, 1924 in the *Annual Report of Jamaica* (Jamaica: Government Printing Establishment, 1925) p. 85.

Because this practice continued into the twentieth century, it was highly likely that these children described as being ‘lower quality’ were raised as Anglican yet their social background made them unsuited to be housed at the Belmont. In this particular circumstance, administrators discriminated against children admitted to this institution due to their class rather than religious affiliation.

Though based in Kingston and St. Andrew, these early industrial schools catered to the entire island. Soon after, other philanthropic and non-government organizations were granted permission to open Industrial Schools. In 1904, the Happy Grove Industrial School for girls was opened in the parish of Portland to cater to displaced East Indian children.²⁴ Happy Grove eventually became known as the Lyndale Industrial School in 1921 and accepted children of all ethnicities although it maintained a small cohort of children of East Indian ethnicity.²⁵ In November 1913, the Manchester Parochial Board started the Broughton Industrial Home for boys. The school started with seven boys and was open to receive boys from the Resident Magistrate Court.²⁶ In that same year the St. Elizabeth Parochial Board also established the Manning Home for Destitute Children,

²⁴ Report on the Industrial Schools for the year ended 31st March 1905 in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1904 – 1905* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1906) 62.

²⁵ Report of the Board of Supervision for the year ended 31st December 1922 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports, 1922* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1924) p. 71; JA 1B/5/75/117, ‘Draft of Certificate of the Lyndale Industrial School for East Indian Girls Under Law 34 of 1881 and 13 of 1891.’ The girls were transferred from Happy Grove to separate lands and the school renamed Lyndale Industrial School in 1921. School was intended to hold no more than eighteen girls at any one time.

²⁶ Report on Industrial Schools for the year ended 31st of March 1915 in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1914 -1915* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1916).

specifically to house displaced children in the parish.²⁷ The founding of the Broughton and Manning Homes improved the quality of care provided to children under the poor relief administration. Under the Poor Law, Parochial Boards acted as the legal guardians of pauper children and were consequently responsible for their health and education. Children in the Manning Home received three meals a day along with a basic elementary education, which included reading, writing and arithmetic. Girls were trained in hat and mat weaving, sewing, washing and floor cleaning while boys were taught to use a hoe and machete, the two most important implements associated with farming.²⁸

A number of industrial schools and children's homes (orphanages) opened during WWI and in the early 1920s. In June 1917, the Rio Cobre Home for Children of Men of the Jamaica War Contingents opened in the parish of St. Catherine. This institution was one of very few social service provisions made for former members of the West India Regiment who fought in the First World War. By the mid 1920s, the government identified this institution as the ideal space to place pauper and orphaned children younger than eight years of age as a way of alleviating the congestion in the industrial schools. Children older than eight years could then be sent to industrial schools where they would receive adequate

²⁷ The Report of the Board of Supervision for the year ended 31st March 1916 in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1915 - 1916* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1917) p. 473.

²⁸ Report of the Board of Supervision, 1915 - 1916, p. 473.

training until the age of sixteen years.²⁹ Three years later, in 1920, the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation opened the Maxfield Park Home for Pauper Children next door to the Union Poor House. This institution also catered specifically to children of paupers, destitute and orphaned children from the Corporate Area and St. Andrew.

Several industrial schools and orphanages were established in 1921, including the Wortley Orphanage for East Indians (St. Andrew) and Mrs. Swift's Orphanage (Portland). The Farm Industrial School for Boys (St. James) and Carron Hall Girl's Home were also founded that year. Broughton Home, Carron Hall as well the Farm Industrial School were either managed by or associated with the Presbyterian Church.³⁰ Mrs. Swift's Orphanage changed its name to Swift Industrial School once it became certified as an industrial school in 1923. Mrs. Alma Swift, the founder, was appointed as the Superintendent of the Institution.³¹

By 1934, therefore, six industrial schools operated by the local or private management were certified to receive children committed by magistrates under the Pauper Law. Another four orphanages received assistance from the Government but were not certified as industrial schools. General upkeep of

²⁹ Report of the Board of Supervision for the year ended 31st of March 1919, in the *Departmental Reports of Jamaica 1918 – 1919* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office 1920).

³⁰ Report on Industrial Schools for the year ending 31st December 1921 in the *Annual Report of Jamaica together with Departmental Reports 1921* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1922) p. 136.

³¹ JA 1B/5/77/519 (1923) and 1B/5/77/366 (1923), 'Mrs. Alma Swift to the Colonial Secretary 6th September 1923'; Report on Industrial Schools for the year ended 31st March 1924 in the *Annual General Report of Jamaica along with Departmental Reports, 1924* (Jamaica: Government Printing Office, 1926) p. 86.

children came from the Parochial Boards of the parishes to which they belonged as well as grants from the government and charitable institutions. The Inspector of Industrial Schools attached to the Department of Education monitored all of these schools, with the exception of the Government Industrial School and Maxfield Park Home. The Maxfield Park Home was maintained by the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation, while the Government Industrial School fell under the portfolio of Inspector of Prisons and Industrial School who was attached to the Prisons Department.³² Despite the increase in the number of spaces available, children in industrial schools and orphanages composed only a small number of destitute children in the island. In 1916, industrial school children constituted one sixth of the 2,474 of children maintained by parochial boards in the island.³³

³² JA 1B/5/77/70 (1934), 'Mr. Tucker, Acting Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston, 30th November, 1934.'

³³ Report of the Board of Supervision, 1915 – 1916, p. 473.

Table 5: The Number of Industrial School Children in Relation to the Total Number of Destitute Children on Relief 1900 - 1938

Year	Number of Industrial School Children	Total Number of Destitute Children on Relief
1900	208	484
1901	199	462
1903	182	459
1907	264	614
1908	268	658
1909	222	642
1910	268	826
1911	270	899
1912	315	509
1913	333	762
1914	364	916
1915	395	2,159
1916	430	2,474
1917	530	2,676
1918	590	3,088
1922	464	3,098
1928	563	3,298
1929	592	3,737
1930	551	3,517
1933	515	3,611
1934	519	4,404
1935	543	4,469
1936	760	5,002
1937	1,022	5,337
1938	1,078	5,823
Total	11,445	59,924

Source: Figures compiled from select Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision 1900 - 1938

Table Five presents a breakdown of the number of children in the industrial school system in comparison to the overall number of destitute children who received relief under the poor relief system. The Board of Supervision provided yearly reports detailing the expenditure as well as the general nature and type of relief dispensed. Figures of destitute children between 1900 and 1914

typically included only orphans and abandoned children who received assistance as independent paupers, as well as industrial school children. After WWI, there was a dramatic increase in the number of destitute children in the island because the Board of Supervision started to include the number of children boarded to members in the wider community as well as children receiving relief as dependents of paupers. Throughout the 1920s, the Board of Supervision acknowledged the existence of children in orphanages but it did not include them in its reports because those institutions did not fall under the control of their department. By the 1930s, however, this changed and the figures between 1935 and 1938 included all children maintained on the pauper roll, orphanages and industrial schools. Although the number of children in industrial schools gradually increased throughout the period under review, overall they constituted a small fraction of the total number of children maintained in the early years of the child welfare system especially by the 1920s. Nonetheless school administrators expanded facilities to accommodate an increasing number of children each year. Such efforts, however, were stymied by difficulties over which the administrators themselves had little control.

Qualified school administrators played an integral role in creating an efficient and orderly industrial school. Members of the Colonial Administration, however, believed that Jamaica lacked the adequate human resources to engage in the reformation of delinquent youths in the island. As a result, they gave

preference to persons from London applying for jobs in Jamaica, especially in the nineteenth century. The preference of European experts over locals was a common practice in all spheres of administration and the Government Reformatory was no different. The Stony Hill institution clearly reflected the propensity of Jamaican authorities to choose European administrators who had previous experience with reformatories in Europe. As a result, European Superintendents with experience in industrial schools and reformatory institutions in Europe or more specifically the United Kingdom were in demand especially after several disastrous experiences with local administrators.

On the 2nd of April 1881, the Secretary of State appointed Thomas Mair to become the Superintendent of Industrial School in Stony Hill. Born in Ayrshire, Scotland in June 1850, Mair was educated at the Science and Art School, Kilmarnock, Scotland. Upon completing his education he joined the staff of the Paisley Reformatory until 1881 when he moved to Jamaica to be the Superintendent of the Government Reformatory and Industrial School. At the age of sixty-six, Thomas Mair retired from the post of Superintendent on the 8th June 1916 after thirty-five years of service. His son James Mair was then promoted to the post of Superintendent soon after.³⁴ In preparation for stepping into his father's shoes, James Mair went to the Paisley Reformatory in Scotland for three

³⁴ Stephen Hill, *Who's Who of Jamaica 1919 – 1921* p. 127 – 8.

months of training.³⁵ Similarly, Mr. A.F. Gear, Superintendent at the St. Catherine Reformatory, also from the United Kingdom, had an extensive knowledge of botany and agriculture and had spent thirteen years working in several colonies around the world, including Africa. In fact Gear contested the legality of the government to hire James Mair as the Superintendent because he felt that he had more general experience than Mair and ought to have been considered.³⁶ Despite this initial conflict, James Mair retained his position as Superintendent of the Government Industrial School, Stony Hill. This meant, however, that the Mair family wielded a strong influence over industrial school policy in the island during the early twentieth century.

Government Industrial School, Stony Hill

The Government Industrial School in Stony Hill was undoubtedly the best representation of an industrial school in Jamaica. Established in the 1850s by philanthropic organizations as two separate institutions along gender lines, each institution served the dual purpose of being a rescue home for abandoned and orphaned children as well as a rehabilitation institution for criminal children. Criminal and orphaned children lived together, received the same training, and participated in the same activities. When in 1869 the government assumed

³⁵ BNA CO 137/690 # 94, 'Sir Sydney Oliver, Governor of Jamaica to Rt. Hon. Lewis Harcourt, Sec. of State for the Colonies 28th March 1912.'

³⁶ BNA CO 137/711/11, 'Mr. A. F. Gear to Rt. Hon. Lewis Harcourt 13th September 1915.'

responsibility for managing the school, they merged the institutions and appropriated the buildings of the Old Military Barracks in Stony Hill, St. Andrew. The government reopened the new institution as the Government Reformatory and Industrial School and retained an industrial educational program similar to the earlier program run by the charity organizations. Initially the Superintendent reported to the governor; however widespread rumors of mismanagement led the governor to institute a commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations.³⁷ The commissioners determined that the Prison Department was best suited to effectively oversee and assess how the superintendent ran the institution. Although existing legislation facilitated the creation of industrial schools, no such organization, in the true sense of the word, came into existence until the 1890s. Thereafter, industrial schools fell under the portfolio of the Department of Education while the Government Reformatory remained under the portfolio of the Director of Prisons. Theoretically only neglected, displaced, abandoned, or orphaned children could be admitted to the Industrial School, while those found guilty of crime would be sentenced to the Reformatory. In reality, however, the Government Reformatory received both groups of children. This practice meant

³⁷ Members of the surrounding community wrote the Governor about the behavior of children from the reformatory as well as their physical condition, health and wellbeing. See BNA CO 137/484/10; CO 137/484/12; CO 137/484/24; CO 137/484/28; CO 137/484/30; CO 137/485/12 – 13; CO 137/485/56; CO 137/485/63 – 69; CO 137/486 #4.

that within the public eye, all children admitted to the Government Reformatory and Industrial School were considered criminal children.³⁸

Many argued that such generalizations crippled the progress of the inmates after they had left the institution. In the hope of counteracting this stereotype, in 1910 the government changed the name of the institution to the Government Industrial School. Yet the institution remained under the control of the Director of Prisons throughout the period. Throughout the early twentieth century, therefore, public debates focused on removing the stigma of criminality associated with the Government Industrial School by transferring oversight from the Department of Prisons to the Department of Education.³⁹ The Institution at Stony Hill, therefore, existed as an Industrial school in name only but a Reformatory in reality.⁴⁰

As the premiere reformatory and industrial school institution on island, the Government Industrial School received visitors from all over the world. This included dignitaries such as Mr. W.D. Battershill, Acting Colonial Secretary, who was later appointed as the Governor of Cyprus. Persons working in reformatories in the United States, Britain and Canada also visited the school.⁴¹ The Superintendent reported both negative and positive comments to the Director of Prisons. Mr. E. Willoughby Taunton, former Inspector of Reforming and

³⁸ Hereafter referred to as the Government Industrial School.

³⁹ *The Daily Gleaner*, March 29, 1927, 'The Reformatory or Home.'

⁴⁰ JA 1B/5/77/2253 (1923), 'Crown Solicitor to the Hon. Colonial Secretary 31st October 1923.'

⁴¹ JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), 'Extracts from Visitors' Book – Government Industrial School, Stony Hill.'

Industrial Schools in Great Britain, commented in February 1931 that he had ‘a most interesting and pleasant visit [and was] particularly impressed by the really practical work done by the boys in woodwork, masonry and other departments.’⁴² Another visitor, Rufus Cole of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, commented that ‘the principles underlying the training of the boys seem to me thoroughly sound and...applied in a most practical and effective way.’⁴³ Some visitors, however, were not as impressed with the institution. One person described the institution as an ‘orphanage combined with a school for toughs.’ In another instance, someone commented that parents were unable to see their children, the food was horrible and that ‘hookworm was universal’ within the school compound.⁴⁴

The Jamaican administration took time to acknowledge and address each accusation. It was generally agreed that the school served a dual purpose as a home for destitute and delinquent children but definitely not a home for ‘toughs’ (seasoned child offenders) as mentioned. Administrators made a distinction between neglected children penalized for a petty offence as opposed to those who were well on their way to being hardened criminals. Those admitted to the institution constitute the former group; children caught committing a petty offence

⁴² JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), ‘Extracts from Visitors’ Book – Government Industrial School, Stony Hill.’

⁴³ JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), ‘Extracts from Visitors’ Book – Government Industrial School, Stony Hill.’

⁴⁴ JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), Draft correspondence to Lord Moyne D.S.O, Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 1942.’

as a result of their circumstances. While parents were generally allowed to see their children especially on Sundays and other public holidays, the best-behaved boys were also usually granted permission to leave the institution to visit family and friends. Last of all, all inmates were routinely treated through the medical department for hookworm and other parasitic diseases. The school housed on site a Medical Officer, two trained nurses, and a qualified dispenser, all of who were for the sole use of the inmates. In fact, based on visitor logs and annual reports, the industrial school was a community-oriented organization, with many of the visitors to the school coming from the surrounding communities. These visitors purchased products and agricultural supplies from the schools and took advantage of the services provided in the carpentry, blacksmith and masonry departments.⁴⁵

The school faced various financial and administrative complications. Under the Industrial Schools and Reformatory law, children could be picked up off the streets and sent to the institution without proper information as to their age. This often proved to be a real challenge to effective administration. A classic case was the story of Samuel Wilson. In November 1934, Mrs. Martha Wilson wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting the release of her son due to the fact that she was sick and needed him to help her. Samuel Wilson was convicted of ‘idling’ and sentenced to the Industrial School in 1928 for six years. His estimated date of release was October 1934, which, according to her records, would make

⁴⁵ JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), ‘Draft correspondence to Lord Moyne D.S.O, Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 1942.’

him twenty – one years of age.⁴⁶ However, according to the school records, Samuel Wilson was seven years old when admitted to the institution, which made him thirteen at the time of her request.⁴⁷ The Colonial Secretary requested Samuel's birth certificate as evidence as well as a statutory declaration from a minister of religion or justice of the peace that the certificate was an original. This record would consequently prove that he was twenty-one rather than thirteen years of age.⁴⁸ Soon afterwards, Superintendent James Mair asked the Medical Officer Dr. Grant to assess Samuel. Dr. Grant found that Samuel was a strong and healthy boy, well above the age of sixteen years with a slight defective hearing. He recommended him for discharge.⁴⁹ Governor Denham approved Samuel Wilson's discharge from the Industrial School on 18th of April 1935.⁵⁰ This lack of communication across government departments made it difficult for school administrators to compile detailed records on the emotional, physical and mental health and backgrounds of admits.

Concerns about improving the health of the children upon admission dominated correspondence between colonial and school officials. Many of the children entering these institutions suffered from general poor health and had to be treated for intestinal worms and parasites as well as ulcers. On-site medical

⁴⁶ JA 1B/5/77/22 (1934), 'Mrs. Martha Wilson to the Colonial Secretary 27th November 1934.'

⁴⁷ JA 1B/5/77/22 (1934), 'Minute Paper.'

⁴⁸ JA 1B/5/77/22 (1934), 'Mr. Dignum to Mrs. Martha Wilson 9th January 1935.'

⁴⁹ JA 1B/5/77/22 (1934), 'Dr. Grant to James Mair 10th April 1935.'

⁵⁰ JA 1B/5/77/22 (1934), 'Order to the Superintendent of the Government Industrial School, Stony Hill.'

officials treated inmates for a variety of conditions including bronchitis, yaws, scabies, conjunctivitis, skin ulcers, anemia, syphilis and tuberculosis. Precautions also had to be taken against outbreaks of communicable diseases such as influenza and chicken pox. Quarterly reports also referred to numerous fractures, sprains and injuries that came from running a boarding institution. The dentist paid several visits each quarter to clean teeth, remove superficial decay, extract teeth, treat abscesses and put in fillings.⁵¹ Tackling many of these issues required not just immediate and systematic attention but also an overall holistic approach to diet, sanitation and general lifestyle. All of these goals had to be achieved at a minimal cost to both the school and government.

Medical officials regularly monitored and updated the diet scale of the industrial school, prisons and other government institutions. Throughout the 1930s, officials expressed concern as to the amount of salt in the children's diet. Salted fish, pork and beef were served on a regular basis. Much of this occurred because the institution lacked a cold storage facility. Therefore, when fresh beef, for example, was purchased from the Government Contractor, half of it had to be used immediately in the diet and the remainder salted and stored for consumption in the near future. Similar practices had to be taken with pork, which was purchased from local producers.⁵² This practice was not specific to the Industrial

⁵¹ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Quarterly Reports of the Stony Hill Industrial School.'

⁵² JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), 'Minute, W. Shillingford, Director of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, 11th July 1939.'

School as most Jamaicans lacked access to cold storage and as a result used salt to preserve meats over an extended period. Medical officials, however, argued that fresh rather than salted meat was most suitable for the children's diet. Officials also advocated the use in the diet of 'protective' foods such as a daily supply of fresh fruits, green vegetables and fresh milk. Most of these foods could be produced on site by the school's agricultural department as a way of lowering the cost of providing food for inmates. Officials also substituted coconut oil for lard and margarine, and limited the latter's use for inclusion in the hospital diet for sick inmates.⁵³

The Board of Visitors conducted regular inspections on various aspects of the running of the institution. On February 21, 1940, Edith Clarke, Secretary to the Board of Supervision along with Mr. B. H. Easter, Director of Education, visited the institution to conduct the scheduled inspection. Miss Clarke focused specifically on the quality of the diet and medical care that the children received. According to the established diet scale, the children would receive four ounces of beef every Monday, Wednesday and Friday and three ounces of pork every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. That week, however, she found that three ounces of pork would be served in place of beef. Generally within government institutions such as prisons, hospitals, and poor houses, strict attention was paid to the cost and distribution of food to inmates.

⁵³ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), 'Minute, W. Shillingford, Director of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, 11th July 1939.'

Administrators took several factors into consideration when pricing and allocating diets, including the loss in the weight of food during cooking. It was within this context that the Medical Department notified government departments that the difference in weight between uncooked and cooked meat should be 5-1/3 ounces.⁵⁴ Using this scale, Clarke estimated that the average loss of meat during cooking was 2-2/3 ounces of cooked meat for every four-ounce issued. However, when she weighed the diets for the first and second meals she found 1-½ ounces and two ounces of pork, respectively, being served to each child. Clarke concluded that the loss of meat during the overall cooking process was greater at Stony Hill than it should be.⁵⁵ Such exacting focus on the weight and quality of food was an attempt to guarantee that each child received the appropriate amount of food for good health. More importantly, however, this allowed inspectors to verify if ‘food stores’ were being used effectively in government run institutions.

Clarke’s inspection of the medical department revealed that there was a general failure to consistently maintain the medical records of the inmates. She noticed that no routine blood test was administered to children upon their admission; nor were they examined and given a clean bill of health before they were admitted to the school. Clarke believed that it was important to assess the health of children entering all children’s residential homes in the island.

⁵⁴ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), ‘Thomas, Acting Sec. Board of Visitors to the Colonial Secretary, 1st April 1940.’

⁵⁵ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), ‘Thomas, Acting Sec. Board of Visitors to the Colonial Secretary, 1st April 1940.’

Unfortunately, the absence of a 'receiving home' for children entering the system meant that each institution had to independently verify the health of new admits. The lack of secondary support institutions such as 'receiving homes' hindered the ability of local government and social service institutions to collect and provide school administrators with vital health and social information. Access to information such as a detailed medical assessment prior to entry would arm on-site medical staff with the necessary information to treat illnesses and conditions. School administrators agreed whole-heartedly with Clarke. Dr. Aird, the Medical Officer, in response, argued that the heavy workload of the Government Bacteriologist made it difficult for him to collect samples from each inmate at admission. As a result he opted to treat all inmates for hookworm and generally had good results from this practice.⁵⁶

The conditions that plagued inmates at the industrial school were a reflection of the diseases that commonly affected the Jamaican population. Generally, efforts were made to control the spread as well as the intensity of illnesses at the institution. So, for example, the Rockefeller Institute conducted a 'thorough survey' of tuberculosis amongst inmates in the school and provided inoculations to the children in an effort to stem the tide of the disease in the institution.⁵⁷ Clearly inadequate access to medical facilities as well as financial

⁵⁶ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), 'Thomas, Acting Sec. Board of Visitors to the Colonial Secretary, 1st April 1940.'

⁵⁷ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1932), 'Mair to Shillingford 4th January 1935.'

difficulties complicated efforts to improve health care provided to inmates at the Industrial School.

Medical officials, however, did engage in small-scale experiments geared towards finding local alternatives that were cheaper and added value to the diet and lives of inmates. In September of 1938, Dr Aird selected forty boys to assess the impact of adding cod liver oil to the diet of the inmates. The boys were divided into two groups of twenty. Both groups were weighed and given a series of stool and blood examinations. In January 1939, cod liver oil was included in the diet of Group A and the results compared to Group B after three months. It was found that boys on cod liver oil increased their body weight faster than those who were not on cod liver oil. They also realized that granulated eyelids cleared up with this treatment alone.⁵⁸ According to the medical establishment, granulated eyelids was a communicable disease commonly found among Jamaican children and was often 'treated by the prolonged application of lotions and caustic applications.'⁵⁹ In more severe cases there was marked damage on the inner surfaces of the eyelids. Based on the findings of Dr. Aird, the medical establishment immediately recommended that inmates be given small doses of cod liver oil daily. These efforts reflected a general interest in the health of inmates in the institution.

⁵⁸ The condition 'granulated eyelids' is also known as Blepharitis and is not considered contagious.

⁵⁹ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), 'Minute: J.M. Hall, Asst. Director of Medical Services to the Colonial Secretary.'

Many of the foods introduced into the diet of the children depended on the ability of the agricultural department to meet not just internal but local demand. Weather fluctuations such as drought, flooding, as well as lack of a consistent water supply often affected output. Furthermore, the department was subject to the same conditions under which all agriculturalists operated. Fluctuations in demand and supply also affected the school's ability to make a profit on the local market. The school farm grew and harvested yam and other ground provisions, bananas and other fruits, and cocoa. It also raised chickens. In the late 1930s, the school administration hired a graduate from the Hope Farm School to oversee and implement a more systematic agricultural program at the school. The success of this effort, however, depended on the willingness of the instructor to stay for the low pay being offered.⁶⁰

The Government Industrial School suffered from a high turnover rate of teachers due to the low pay offered comparative to teachers in the education system. Teachers at the institution received less pay for more work. This was especially true for the skilled artisans who taught masonry, carpentry, and tailoring as well as metal work. Mr. Mair, in correspondence with Shillingford, argued that

‘Schoolmasters play a great part in the training of the boys, in moulding their characters and general discipline...the whole tone

⁶⁰ JA 1B/5/77/28 (1934), ‘Minute.’

of the Institution depends to a very large extent on the School – masters.⁶¹

Management, therefore, lost several excellent teachers to other institutions due to the lower salaries offered at the school. As a result, this high turnover of teachers hindered the effective running of the institution. In 1922, Mair suggested that the government upgrade the salaries of the schoolmaster as well as the first and second assistant. If the government failed to accept his suggestion, the school would only be able to hire teachers who were unable at that time to find more lucrative employment elsewhere.⁶² Generally, where possible, the government attempted to meet the requests of the superintendent. But very often they identified the poor economic climate as a deterring factor in paying teachers higher salaries and consequently making improvements to the general infrastructure of the institution.

Another major issue with running the school was the quality of education provided to the inmates. Many of the children entered the school with no prior exposure to education. Some inmates suffered from various mental and physical disabilities that hindered their ability to perform in the average school setting. By the 1930s a great number of the inmates admitted to the Government Industrial School were over the age of eleven years and had never previously attended school. Administrators described such boys as ‘truants...[who] detest and have no

⁶¹ JA 1B/5/75/123, ‘James Mair, Superintendent to the Director of Prisons, 11th January 1922.’

⁶² JA 1B/5/75/123, ‘James Mair, Superintendent to the Director of Prisons, 11th January 1922.’

desire for school education.’⁶³ James Mair, the Superintendant, argued that those boys admitted to the institution at nine years or younger would receive a solid education comparative to the average child during their tenure at the institution. Comparatively, instructors had less time with the older boys because the duration of their stay was much shorter – on average two to four years depending on their age at admittance. As a result their educational experience was significantly more stunted than that of their younger counterparts. The table below provides the percentages of boys admitted to the school without previous educational experience.

Table 6: Ages and the Percentage of Inmates at Stony Hill who have not Attended School in 1937

Ages	Percentage on total	Percentage of inmates who did not previously attend school
9 years and under	20%	80%
10 years	16%	90%
11 years	22.50%	70%
12 years	26.50%	60%
13 years	13%	60%
14 years	2%	60%

Source: Taken from JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934) Mair to Shillingford 25th February 1937

According to Mair’s statistics, inmates nine years and younger constituted twenty percent of the general school population. Eighty percent of inmates in this category had no previous exposure to elementary education. A significant portion

⁶³ JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934), ‘James Mair, Superintendent to W. Shillingford, Inspector 25th February 1937.’

of the school population consisted of boys aged eleven and twelve years of age at 22.5% and 26.5% respectively. Seventy percent of eleven year olds and sixty percent of inmates twelve years of age had never been to school and were completely illiterate. This was in spite of the fact that the older the child the more likely it would be for him/her to have experienced some formal education. The quality of this earlier exposure may have been deficient but nonetheless increased the possibility of such inmates leaving the institution, at the very least, functionally literate. On a whole, the administration argued that older inmates would be underperforming when compared with children their age that attended school consistently in the early years of their lives. Key to this discourse was the idea that the younger the child, the more successful the process of reformation. Like many of their contemporaries, administrators perceived children under ten years of age as impressionable who, once placed in a structured environment, were amenable to change. The older the child, the less receptive he/she was to the reformation process. School administrators sought to address this situation.

Typically, children were discharged from the school at the age of sixteen unless the superintendent deemed otherwise. Law 8 of 1929, Industrial Schools and Reformatory Act, allowed for the extension of an inmate's term until the age of eighteen years based on the recommendation of the superintendent. Many times, during the period under review, Mr. Mair recommended that certain inmates be held back either because they showed promise or were unfit to be sent

out on their own. In 1932, for example, Mair wrote to Shillingford requesting that the governor approve the extension of inmate Cecil Davis' time at the institution.

He described him as being a

...small boy of poor physique and mentality; yet has shown much improvement – but will ever be a charge on the Government. Attached to the Tailor's Department⁶⁴

Mair placed Davis in the Tailor's Department in hope of providing him with the opportunity to acquire a skill. His 'poor' mental and physical condition apparently hindered his overall progress while at the institution. The decision to extend his stay allowed Mair and his teaching staff more time to provide Cecil with some stability and security. Similarly, Mair requested that Shadrack Hines should be retained until the age of eighteen years on the basis that he 'started to make definite progress after showing much dullness.'⁶⁵ Shadrack Hines, originally from Smith's Village in Kingston, arrived at the institution at the age of thirteen on the 26th April 1928. While at Stony Hill he engaged in mostly agricultural activities and continued to do so after the Governor extended his stay on the 22nd March 1932. The improved performance of inmates, therefore, provided them with the opportunity to extend their stay at the institution. More importantly, each of these cases reflected individualized care and concern for children in the institution.

⁶⁴ JA 1B/5/77/543 (1932), 'W. Shillingford, Inspector Industrial School to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston 14th April 1932.' Appended a copy of the correspondence from James J. Mair, Superintendent Government Industrial School to W. Shillingford, Inspector Industrial School 12th April, 1932.

⁶⁵ JA 1B/5/77/543 (1932), 'James Mair, Superintendent to W. Shillingford, Inspector Industrial School, 17th March 1932.'

Another case worthy of mention is that of Donald McLeannan whom Mair described as

...A very promising boy – Scout – Reading in 6th Std. – Learning Carpentry and Cabinet making and fairly advanced. To be kept on as Trade Boy. Very undesirable home and environment.⁶⁶

Donald McLeannan entered the industrial school at the age of seven on the 20th February 1923. After discreetly investigating his home situation with the help of the police force, they determined that sending him back to his home environment would undo all he had learned at the Industrial School. Based on the description provided, Donald successfully engaged in more activities than Shadrach and Cecil, both of whom were his contemporaries at the Institution. Concerns about the family life of the inmates as well as impact of parental irresponsibility on inmates also permeated the departmental correspondence.

Mair vented his frustration to Shillingford, the Inspector of Industrial Schools

'I see no reason why Stony Hill should be treated as a dumping ground for the children of careless and irresponsible parents or as a clearing house for troublesome children. It is not so intended. Further it appears that the children are not generally placed at work afterwards as they go back to their parents, who are quite prepared to take them plus the bonuses they earn (his emphasis)⁶⁷

⁶⁶ JA 1B/5/77/543 (1932), 'James Mair, Superintendent to W. Shillingford, Inspector, Industrial School, 16th January 1932.'

⁶⁷ JA 1B/5/77/25 (1934), 'Minute Paper.'

Mair believed that some parents who sent their children to the Industrial School due to behavioral issues made no effort to contribute to their maintenance during their stay at the institution. Such parents, however, expected to benefit in the long run from the vocational training the children acquired while at the institution.

Administrators at the Industrial School established a reward system as a way of encouraging inmates to adhere to the rules and regulations of the school. At the end of their tenure, they received a small sum of money as well as tools of their trade, both of which were important in providing them with a start in life. Mr. Mair was convinced, however, that parents sought to take advantage of their earning potential and access their reward money.⁶⁸ Concerns about the irresponsibility of parents and guardians, were not specific to the Industrial School and Reformatory system. Similar sentiments were expressed amongst the poor relief administration. They argued that many of aged and infirm entering almshouses did so due to a refusal of extended family members to care for loved ones. Such resistance, administrators believed contributed to the high cost of relief giving in the island.

It was within this context that the Hon. A. S. Jelf, Colonial Secretary for Jamaica, sent out a circular to Resident Magistrates in the island to ascertain if magistrates established the financial status of parents before sending children to

⁶⁸ JA 1B/5/77/25 (1934), 'Mair to Shillingford 16th December 1934.'

industrial schools and orphanages.⁶⁹ Almost all the Parochial Boards replied that the children sent to the Industrial School were paupers or generally orphans with no other means of support. Furthermore, the Inspector of the Poor assessed each of these cases, where applicable, before the child was sent to the industrial school. The St. Ann Parochial Board reported that it had never been able to recoup the cost of sending children to industrial schools as only destitute children were sent to the institution.⁷⁰ Only one child had been committed to the industrial school from the parish of St. James on the basis that his mother, a registered pauper, had been sent to prison.⁷¹ Such responses challenged Mr. Mair supposition that parents opted not to support their children when sent to industrial school. In fact, the frequency with which Mair reiterated these views suggests that he accepted local perceptions of the irresponsibility and lack of accountability amongst the lower classes. His mission, therefore, was to challenge the earlier socialization of inmates by providing them with the tools to survive in society at the end of their tenure.

Mair argued that in the public sphere that the school had been classified as a juvenile prison and the inmates as prisoners. Civil servants such as policemen, magistrates, and medical officers also reinforced this perception by referring to

⁶⁹ JA 1B/5/77/70 (1934), 'Circular no. 4: A. S. Jelf, Colonial Secretary to Parochial boards 8th January 1935.'

⁷⁰ JA 1B/5/77/70 (1934), 'Arscott, Clerk of the St. Ann Parochial Board to A. S. Jelf 15th January 1935.'

⁷¹ JA 1B/5/77/70 (1934), 'Clerk of the St James Parochial Board to A.S. Jelf 15th January 1935.'

the children as criminals. Since its inception in 1869, the institution had to grapple with the negative perceptions of the school. Mair felt that the persistence of such stereotypes in the twentieth century demonstrated how sections of the public wished to

‘...separate the children here into two classes as “orphans, waifs and strays” on the one hand and “Criminals” on the other, the “wheat and the tares.” I would therefore ask...what practical purpose would his training serve and what would be his future hope of going out into the world coming from an institution for the reform of criminal boys.’⁷²

In an effort to get rid of the stigma attached to the institution, Mair advocated a change in the name of the institution. He recommended the discontinuation of terms such as “Reformatory” and ‘Industrial School,’ both of which were out of date in the metropole. In Britain, the trend was to use the term “Home” or “Home Office Schools.” Within the colonial administration, however, the focus was to shift the industrial school from the portfolio of prisons to that of the department of Education.

Throughout the twentieth century, several discussions were held over the possibility of removing the Stony Hill Industrial School from the portfolio of the Director of Prisons to the Director of Education. Administrators believed that the public identified the Industrial School at Stony Hill as a modified prison and as a result the inmates were defined as criminals. In reality both pauper and ‘criminal’

⁷² JA 1B/5/77/25 (1934), ‘Mair to Shillingford 16th December 1934.’

children were housed at the institution. Many entered the system through courts because they had either been found wandering without any visible means of support, had been abandoned, or were caught stealing food and other basic provisions. Furthermore, only a small number of the children brought before the courts were actually sentenced to the Industrial School until the age of sixteen years. The crux of the matter was that no real difference existed between reformatories and industrial schools in Jamaica. In fact, the closest example to a real reformatory in the island was the St. Catherine District Prison Juvenile Reformatory for boys, which was housed on the same compound as the prison itself. This institution catered to the most disruptive boys in the industrial school system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁷³ In contrast, the ‘Government Industrial School’ catered to less disruptive children and provided them with access to a much more diverse curriculum.

Members of the Board of Visitors resisted early efforts in the 1920s to remove the Stony Hill Industrial School from the portfolio of the Director of Prisons to that of Education. Major E. T. Dixon, a member of the board of visitors for the Reformatory and Industrial School, argued that while it was plausible that changing the name of the institution might remove any ‘criminal taint’, such a

⁷³ BNA CO 137/711/11, ‘Sydney Oliver to Mr. C. Grindle 23rd October 1915.’ Mr. Oliver argued that the Industrial School at Stony Hill became crowded. They re-christened the school as an Industrial school and used it as a ‘sieve’ to remove boys of more questionable character. The Reformatory at the St. Catherine District Prison was created to house these boys and have them trained under the supervision of Mr. A. F. Gear. Mr. Gear had a background in the Borstal system.

change did not eliminate the necessity for a reformatory.⁷⁴ He believed that such an effort placed a ‘premium on pauperism’ while ignoring the reality that there were ‘children of distinctly criminal tendencies.’ Dixon went further to suggest that such children needed to be segregated from their peers and supervised by a man such as the Director of Prisons who was qualified in eradicating such behaviors.⁷⁵ Other members, such as Mr. C. Halman Beard, Mr. H.A.L Simpson and the Hon. A. E. DaCosta, all agreed with Dixon. They believed that the stigma of criminality was inevitable and that there were children in the institution that required some form of strict regulation. In fact, it was common practice since the late nineteenth century to transfer some of the most incorrigible inmates from Alpha and other industrial schools to Stony Hill in the hope of reforming them. Another member Mr. F. J. O’Leary went as far to say that the school was an industrial school in name only and as a result was really a reformatory.⁷⁶

Similar discussions reoccurred in 1935 when a committee was appointed to review the possibility of separating the industrial school from the reformatory.⁷⁷ At that time, the Director of Education visited the school on a regular basis and monitored the quality of education being provided to inmates. The school’s annual report was collated with those of similar institutions and

⁷⁴ JA 1B/5/77/224 (1926), ‘Memorandum of Discussion at a meeting of the board of Visitors of Government Industrial School, 21st May 1926.’

⁷⁵ JA 1B/5/77/224 (1926), ‘Memorandum of Discussion.’

⁷⁶ JA 1B/5/77/224 (1926), ‘Memorandum of Discussion.’

⁷⁷ JA 1B/5/77/9 (1934), ‘Director of education to the Colonial Secretary 6th February 1935.’

reported in the annual reports of the Department of Education. However, by the end of 1938, the school existed in a form of limbo, torn between the Department of Education and Prisons. This reflected the continued ambiguity of the colonial administration in relation to the institution and its overall mandate. Were school administrators educating neglected children or reforming juvenile delinquents? Two years later, in 1940, the school was still described as a home for destitute and delinquent children.⁷⁸ Many of its inmates were described as neglected children who had been caught committing a petty crime. Their criminality, therefore, was a consequence of their neglect rather than a by-product of their socialization. However, this group cohabited with ‘delinquent’ children. Was the difference between the two groups real or imagined? By 1938, the colonial and school administrators failed to agree on a concise policy towards children living in industrial schools and orphanages in the country. Nonetheless, Mr. Mair aimed to implement an extensive school curriculum that targeted broad range of mental and physical activities.

Curriculum

In the early twentieth century, Superintendent James Mair organized the boys in the school around a house system. He established five houses – the Governor’s House, the Superintendent’s House, The Bishop’s House, the Colonial

⁷⁸ JA 1B/5/77/267 (1940), ‘Governor of Jamaica to the Rt. Hon. Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies 4th February 1942.’

Secretary's House and the Visitor's House. The main goal was to inculcate a sense of loyalty and corporation, instill a sense of community as well as encourage good behavior among inmates. More importantly, this system taught children a sense of responsibility to his/her fellow teammates and to subject themselves to the 'extremely powerful influence of Public Opinion.'⁷⁹ Such a program focused on training boys and girls (to a lesser extent) to make them fit for citizenship.⁸⁰ As a result, the school's program paid attention to developing the mind, body, and character through school work, physical drills, games, through their dedication to learning skills in workshops, the cook-house, bakery, farms and through general work. Inmates received Good Conduct Badges for good behavior, and this added points to their house. Bad behavior, however, resulted in the loss of badges in addition to receiving a warning or being subjected to corporal punishment. Houses also competed against each other in sporting events and other school activity. Upon admission, therefore, each boy was placed in a house. In reality, girls did not receive the same quality of training in citizenship due to the fact that they constituted a very small percentage of the school population.

Children at the Government Industrial School, Stony Hill, spent approximately fifteen hours a week receiving an elementary education. Their vocational training occupied another thirty-six hours a week. Between six and

⁷⁹ JA 1B/5/77/188 (1926), 'Minute: Shillingford to the Colonial Secretary.'

⁸⁰ JA 1B/5/77/188 (1926), 'Minute: Shillingford to the Colonial Secretary.'

nine o'clock in the morning, inmates tidied their beds, showered, and attended to their basic needs.⁸¹ At ten, the boys were divided into two groups, with one group going to classes while the other was engaged in vocational pursuits.⁸² At two in the afternoon, the groups switched places. Generally, however, whenever the workshops required the full services of the boys, they were taken out of classes. The students nonetheless had an extensive schedule that included evening classes, choir practices, scouting, social evenings as well as duties on the weekends. Night classes were held for senior boys so as to make them more effective in their respective trades.⁸³

The skills taught to boys at Stony Hill included carpentry, blacksmith, tailoring, masonry, cooking and baking as well as general agricultural work. Each group engaged in general work for the institution, for the Girls' Department (until 1935) as well as the general public. For example in March 1932, Mr. Mair reported that the thirty-six boys learning carpentry repaired buildings on the institution as well as being engaged in making, repairing and polishing a variety of furniture for the general public. Similarly in June 1932 the twenty boys in the Mason's Department built a new kitchen for the Girls Department and also made

⁸¹ JA 1B/5/77/114 (1932).

⁸² JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934), 'Minute from W. Shillingford to Colonial Secretary 6th December 1934.'

⁸³ JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934), 'Mair to Shillingford 25th February 1937.'

alterations to an old school room to convert it into a dining room.⁸⁴ They also built concrete posts for customers.

Inmates displayed their work at fairs and participated in competitions and national events. Students exhibited 36 articles of furniture, iron gates, horseshoes, concrete reinforced posts and several provisions from the school's farm at the All Jamaica Exhibition in 1932.⁸⁵ In February 1934, they also exhibited items in the Jamaica and Empire Trade Exhibition and Fair.⁸⁶ The Scouts attended the Farewell Rally to the outgoing governor Sir Edward Stubbs while the Band participated in the Welcome Rally to new governor, Sir Ransford Slater.⁸⁷ In December 1933, the boys' choir entered and won the elementary schools competition while the older group came second to Calabar College in the Secondary Schools Competition. The Band retained the Military Cup at the Musical Festival, which they won in 1931.⁸⁸

By 1933 the school's fortunes were apparently improving. Mr. Mair reported in his second quarterly report of 1933 that the school had a fairly successful 'Open Day' educating the public on the activities of the students at the school. He also announced that the Schoolmaster, Mr. Rainford, and Group Scoutmaster Mr. Rodgers, had been granted a leave of absence to attend the

⁸⁴ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'James Mair to Shillingford, 7th July 1932.'

⁸⁵ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Mair to Shillingford, 6th October 1932.'

⁸⁶ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Mair to Shillingford, 4th April 1934.'

⁸⁷ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Mair to Shillingford, 7th January 1933.'

⁸⁸ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932) 'Mair to Shillingford 8th January 1934'

World Jamboree in Hungary. Mr. Rodgers received the coveted Gilwell Wood Badge for efficient Scoutcraft.⁸⁹ The school also had an Annual Athletic Sports event every August and generally the boys participated in sports such as cricket and football. They also had drill practice on a regular basis. In fact, the boys participated in such a wide range of activities that the Superintendent found it difficult to find competitors for them amongst the general school population.

‘all the boys here receive Vocational training which boys at Elementary Schools do not receive and our boys are taught to a greater extent drill, physical exercises, discipline and games. We have not been able to find an Elementary School XI ... match for our boys in either cricket or football.’⁹⁰

Throughout the 1930s, the boys continued successfully to participate in national performing arts competition.

Some detail about the lives of boys entering the institution can be ascertained from correspondence in the 1930s. For example Jacob Eccleston, originally from the parish of Hanover, was sentenced to the Industrial School on the 8th October 1931.⁹¹ He was approximately ten and half years old. Upon his arrival to the institution, Jacob was placed in Colonial Secretary’s House. On the 24th March 1933 he received nine stripes (whipped) for leaving the school property. In addition, his house lost one Good Conduct Badge (GCB) as a result

⁸⁹ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), ‘Mair to Shillingford, 8th July 1933.’

⁹⁰ JA 1B/5/77/27 (1934), ‘Mair to Shillingford, 25th February 1937.’

⁹¹ JA 1B/5/77/145 (1932), ‘Returns of Juvenile Offenders 1931.’

of his 'mis-behavior.'⁹² Later in August that year, he received six stripes for breaking away from work, losing his house another GCB.⁹³ In January, June and November of 1934, he was punished for stealing grapefruit, cane and bread respectively. He received twelve stripes for attempting to sell the bread. Jacob again received nine stripes in May 1935 for stealing jackfruit and trying to sell it in his dormitory.⁹⁴

Another interesting character was Noel Gravesandie, originally from the parish of St. Andrew. Resident Magistrate Robinson convicted Noel in the Half-Way-Tree Court of false pretences. Accordingly, Robinson sentenced Noel to the Industrial School on the 21st of January 1931 at the age of thirteen until he had attained the age of sixteen years.⁹⁵ Upon his arrival he was placed in the Bishop's House. A year before he was to be discharged, Noel was whipped for stealing money and using obscene language. Thereafter he disappeared from the records.⁹⁶ Similarly, Eaton James from the parish of St. James was convicted of praedial larceny at the age of fourteen and sentenced to the Industrial School, Stony Hill until the age of sixteen.⁹⁷ He too started to misbehave a year before his term had

⁹² JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'W. Shillingford, Inspector, Industrial School to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston, 11th April 1933.' File contains the quarterly reports of the Boys' Industrial School, Stony Hill.

⁹³ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Statement showing offences committed by inmates of the Boys' Industrial School during the Quarter ending 30th September 1933.'

⁹⁴ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Statement showing offences of inmates in Quarterly reports for 1934 and 1935.'

⁹⁵ JA 1B/5/77/145 (1932), 'Returns of Juvenile Offenders for 1931.'

⁹⁶ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Statement showing offences of inmates in Quarterly Reports for 1934.'

⁹⁷ JA 1B/5/77/145 (1932), 'Returns of Juvenile Offenders for 1931.'

ended. In March and July of 1932, Superintendent, James Mair noted in his quarterly reports that Eaton had been whipped for knocking down a boy with his fist and stealing breadfruit respectively.

Another child, Hezekiah Eubanks, was sentenced to the Industrial School, Stony Hill from the parish of Portland, until the age of 16, for breaking the industrial school and reformatories law.⁹⁸ This meant that he was either found wandering without any visible means of support or caught in the company of persons of questionable character. Uriah Cornwall from Kingston also received a similar sentence in 1932.⁹⁹ Though neither list contained the age of the boys, Uriah's name specifically occurred regularly in the statement of offences of inmates in the Industrial School's Quarterly Reports. Uriah was caught and punished for stealing food and clothes on more than four occasions while on another four occasions he was punished for using obscene language and general bad behavior between 1933 and 1935.¹⁰⁰

Behavior such as stealing fruits and vegetables, fighting, and breaking away from classes seems to be identified as standard assertiveness associated with male adolescents. There were times, however, when James Mair found boys beyond the capacity of reform. He would occasionally request that such a boy be transferred to Juvenile Reformatory at the St. Catherine District Prison. In January

⁹⁸ JA 1B/5/77/145 (1932), 'Returns of Juvenile Offenders for 1931.'

⁹⁹ JA 1B/5/77/94 (1933), 'Report on Juvenile Offenders for 1932.'

¹⁰⁰ JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Statement showing offences of inmates in Quarterly Reports for 1933 to 1935.'

1923, Mair asked the Director of Prisons to transfer Ivor Scarlett from the Government Industrial School to Juvenile Reformatory of the St. Catherine District Prison. Ivor Scarlett, from Comfort Hall, St. James, was sentenced to the Industrial School for praedial larceny on the 5th Dec. 1919. He was then twelve years old. Once at the school, he committed several other crimes. In December 1920 he stole corn for which he was whipped. Two years later he was caught stealing potatoes, and a month later willfully destroying property while in the hospital. In July 1922 he was punished for deliberately disobeying orders and by January 1923, he stole money from the nurse and lied. Ivor received twelve stripes and was placed in a cell. Based on the evidence presented, Ivor clearly stole on a regular basis but the movement from stealing produce to stealing money suggests that he may have struggled with kleptomania. In the correspondence, Mair described Ivor Scarlett as a boy of very bad character and fit for the Reformatory in Spanish Town.¹⁰¹ Clearly Mair felt that the institution was not the best fit for him.

The quarterly reports of the institution, however, revealed that the curriculum for the girls lacked the same diversity as that provided for the boys. Very little information was provided of their daily activities except that the girls sewed for the school, did laundry work, and cooked. In April 1934, it was reported that a company of Girl Guides was formed and invested in by the

¹⁰¹ JA 1B/5/77/1698 (1923), 'Mair to the Director of Prisons 4th January 1923.'

island's Secretary Mrs. K.H. Bourne, O.B.E. A hobby-class was also introduced in their curriculum about that period. The girls learned to make mats and hats from banana trash. They also learned to crotchet in their hobby class. By July, Mair reported that the Girl Guides attended the Rally at Kings House and won the hat-making competition while earning second place in the Games.¹⁰² Despite these efforts, the reports clearly reveal that the administration did not invest as much time in providing a high quality of education for the girls.

It is possible that the treatment the girls received was a result of their small number at the institution. Mr. Mair sent detailed quarterly reports to Mr. W. Shillingford on the progress of the Industrial School between April 1932 and October 1935.¹⁰³ These quarterly reports provide the most complete and systematic data on the Industrial School other than the annual reports presented in the Annual Departmental Reports of Jamaica. At a glance the reports revealed that the number of girls admitted to the institution was insignificant as it relates the general population of the institution. Figures suggested that there were, on average, about fifty girls attending the institution until the government closed its doors in September 1935. Table Seven below provides a detailed breakdown of the number of girls housed at the institution between 1932 and 1935.

¹⁰² JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932), 'Rodgers to Shillingford, 10th July 1934.'

¹⁰³ W. Shillingford became Inspector of Prisons and Reformatories in 1926. He worked as a housemaster and tutor in Borstal institutions in London prior to coming to Jamaica to work for the Department of Prisons. By 1939 He was promoted to the position of Director of Prisons.

Table 7: Gender Breakdown of Persons Housed at the Industrial School in Proportion to the General Population between 1932 and 1935

Quarter Ending	Number of Girls	Number of Boys	Total Population
Mar-32	52	355	407
Jun-32	52	359	411
Sep-32	53	362	415
Dec-32	52	354	406
Mar-33	48	354	402
Jun-33	49	360	409
Sep-33	51	371	422
Dec-33	51	370	421
Mar-34	59	370	429
Jun-34	53	376	429
Sep-34	50	372	422
Dec-34	47	350	397
Mar-35	47	340	387
Jun-35	43	342	385
Sep-35	5	330	335

Source: Figures drawn from the Quarterly Reports of the Government Industrial School JA 1B/5/77/187 (1932)

Historically, boys have always outnumbered girls at the institution. From as early as 1885, it was decided to move the girls from Stony Hill and place them in a separate institution in Admirals' Pen in Kingston. Administrators believed that the girls would receive more individual attention in a separate institution and by extension, be more accessible to specific voluntary women organizations from which role models could be provided.¹⁰⁴ Eventually, the Admiral Pen institution was closed in 1899 and the girls returned to Stony Hill. In those early years, administrators repeatedly expressed concern about the poor quality of education

¹⁰⁴ BNA CO 137/488 #234, 'Sir Anthony Musgrave to Sir M. G. Hicks Beach 4th December 1878, Appended Mr. Shaw, Inspector of Prisons and Reformatories to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston, 3rd December 1878,'

that the girls received in relation to the boys; however, very little was actually done to rectify this problem. In fact the girls remained in the shadow of the boys throughout the institution's existence.

Closure of the Girls' Reformatory

In 1935, the Governor convened a select committee of inquiry to investigate the working of the Stony Hill Industrial School. One of the main recommendations of the committee was to close the school entirely as a means of freeing the inmates from the stigma of being in a reformatory.¹⁰⁵ The move was made, however, to close the girls' section with immediate effect. Neither the Governor nor the Director of Prisons conveyed this decision to the Board of Visitors, which was mandated to oversee the running of the institution.¹⁰⁶ By 1935 the number of girls housed at the Government Reformatory, Stony Hill had fallen to forty-eight inmates. It was felt that the space would be more effectively used as a Junior School for boys under ten years old.¹⁰⁷ To facilitate this process, Miss Symons, former headmistress for the girl's department, was retained to work with the boys in the new department.¹⁰⁸ Plans were made to transfer the girls from Stony Hill to other institutions that generally accepted girls. The girls were sent to

¹⁰⁵ JA 1B/5/77/628 (1935), 'Minute.'

¹⁰⁶ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'Souter, Secretary of the Board of Visitors, to the Colonial Secretary 22nd November 1935.'

¹⁰⁷ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934) Colonial Secretary to the Director of Education 27th November 1935

¹⁰⁸ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934) 'W. Shillingford to Colonial Secretary 3rd September 1935'

Alpha Cottage, the Lyndale Home, the Salvation Army Rescue Home and the Rio Cobre Home. Additionally, the Governor directed the Director of Prisons to secure employment for older girls in the hospitals or other government departments. Others were released to their families.

Several complications, however, occurred during the closure of the school. The law allowed the Governor to discharge inmates from the school but did not permit him to further detain inmates in an institution that was not an industrial school. Only a child below the age of 12 years could be transferred from one institution to another.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the Bathesda Home of the Salvation Army was not certified as an industrial school and therefore could not receive inmates from the Stony Hill School. Other institutions such as the Lyndale Home did not have the proper facilities to accept incorrigible children. These legal issues had to be addressed before any child could actually be transferred from the school.

The closure of the institution also made it difficult for Resident Magistrates (RM) to sentence female delinquents brought before them in the courts. No girl under the age of fourteen years could be imprisoned under law 25 of 1904. This forced RMs to discharge such individuals since they could not be sentenced to an Industrial School or find suitable alternatives. The Governor refused to support any proposal 'for the immediate establishment of an Institution to receive girls who are uncontrollable, or who being over twelve years of age of

¹⁰⁹ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'Minute.'

committed offences punishable with penal servitude.’¹¹⁰ Such young girls would have to be sent to prison rather than a reformatory centre. The most common practice at the time was to send first time offenders to the Salvation Army ‘Bethesda Home’ for the tenure of their sentence. Older girls attended the day school while officers in the home taught the younger ones.¹¹¹

In response to a circular sent by the Colonial Secretary, RMs throughout the island reiterated the importance of a government institution in the reform of delinquent children. Acting RM for St. Thomas, argued that

‘Female juvenile first offenders are almost invariably dealt with under the Probation of Offenders’ Law and in a very large percentage of cases they do not come back before the Courts. Particularly...in the country parishes where there is always some responsible relative or friend willing to ...care of such child. In Kingston and Saint Andrew, however, where [there] is a large criminal population localized in a comparatively small area it is far more difficult to rescue the child from her undesirable environment...’¹¹²

Such perspectives suggested that urbanization was a key factor in the development of juvenile delinquency. Cities such as Kingston suffered the most as a result of the closure of the school. The RM for Kingston reiterated this position by arguing that an Industrial school should be provided for

¹¹⁰ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), ‘Colonial Secretary to the Directory of Prisons, 12th July 1935.’

¹¹¹ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), ‘Gordon Simpson, Chief Sec. Salvation Army to C. C. Woolley Colonial Secretary, 8th June 1937.’

¹¹² JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), ‘RM, St Thomas to the C.C. Woolley, 15th June 1937.’

accommodating girls less than fourteen years coming before the courts for fairly serious crimes.¹¹³

H.P. Allen of Westmoreland declared that it 'was inexpedient to inflict punishment involving a prison term' thereby sentencing such children to mix with hardened criminals. The goal, he believed, should be to reform and teach such children so that they would be able to earn a living and be responsible citizens.¹¹⁴ The RM of St. Catherine suggested the creation of correctional department with significantly wider scope than the Industrial School in which inmates could be provided with proper training until the age of eighteen years. He suggested increasing the age of leaving the institution from sixteen to eighteen because he considered sixteen years to be too young for children to be sent out into the world.¹¹⁵

In response, the Director of Prisons argued that the girls department of the Industrial School had been underutilized in the last ten years of its existence, thus resulting in its closure in September 1935. On average eleven girls were sent to the institution each year. For the system to work, he posited that all members of the penal and poor relief administration would have to cooperate by sending 'neglected' and other types of girls to the institution as early as possible for a

¹¹³ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'RM, Kingston to C.C. Woolley, 19th June 1937.'

¹¹⁴ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'RM Westmoreland to C.C. Woolley 16th June 1937.'

¹¹⁵ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), RM, St. Catherine to C.C. Woolley 25th June 1937.'

period of training and reformation before they became young delinquents.¹¹⁶

Table Eight below details the number of girls, by parish, who was sent to the Industrial School. The term ‘reformatory class’ refers to those girls defined as juvenile delinquents.

Table 8: The Number Of Girls Sent to the Industrial School, Stony Hill from 1st July 1925 to 30th June 1935

Reformatory Class	Parish	Industrial School Class
22	Kingston	22
11	St. Andrew	8
10	St. Ann	2
6	Trelawney	0
5	St. Catherine	2
5	St. Elizabeth	0
4	Portland	0
4	Westmoreland	0
3	St. Mary	1
3	Manchester	0
2	St. Thomas	0
1	St. James	1
0	Clarendon	0
0	Hanover	0
77	Totals	36

Source: Taken from JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934)

The table clearly reveals that Kingston sent more girls to the school than any other parish. The figures also suggest that juvenile delinquency amongst girls between the ages of eight and fifteen years was not a significant social problem. This might have been so because families tended to keep their girls in house doing domestic work or they worked alongside their mothers and guardians. Typically,

¹¹⁶ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), ‘Precis.’

boys were not monitored in a similar fashion and therefore had more freedom of movement. This freedom of movement often provided the boys with opportunities to commit crimes such as vagrancy and praedial larceny which in turn brought them in direct conflict with the industrial school laws which legislated the terms of movement as well as access to private/public property. More importantly, these figures reinforce the correlation between urbanity and reporting. Kingston's centrality as the island's administrative and commercial capital, brought with it socio-economic problems such as high unemployment, overcrowding and dilapidated housing settlements. Such issues, by extension, required a greater policing force to monitor crime in Kingston as opposed to other town centers. As a result, a significantly higher proportion of cases originated with Kingston as opposed to other parishes.

Nonetheless there remained a need to provide suitable housing for those girls who were classified as 'waifs and strays' as well as those convicted through the courts. It was found that the Lyndale Home was unsuitable for housing incorrigible girls.¹¹⁷ In one specific case, Melvina Davis was transferred to the Lyndale Home from the Industrial School in Stony Hill. Melvina was twelve years of age and had been previously sent to Stony Hill on the charge of larceny. Once transferred to Lyndale, Melvina absconded from the Institution after stealing several items. The RM for St. Mary refused to recommit her to the

¹¹⁷ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary 18th March 1938.'

Lyndale Home but desired to send her to an Industrial School.¹¹⁸ The government turned to Alpha Cottage Industrial School and the Salvation Army 'Bathesda Home' for assistance. Using the Bathesda Home required the government to certify it as a Reformatory for incorrigible girls. It also required the general expansion of the institution to house more girls than it currently facilitated.¹¹⁹ At the same time, in the proposed arrangement, Alpha remained a home only for neglected children. This decision was reinforced by the belief that incorrigible inmates were corrupting influences on ordinary children and as result had a detrimental effect on overall discipline in the home.

In another instance, two girls who were released to their families returned to Stony Hill requesting assistance. Inez Fairclough returned to the industrial school seeking refuge. She stated that her guardians were unkind to her and falsely accused her of stealing on a regular basis. The Superintendent allowed Inez to stay with a staff member until alternate arrangements could be made for her. Another former inmate, Elsie Hillerie, wrote administrators stating that her mother died a few weeks after she was discharged. As a result she was now homeless with no one to 'take interest in her.'¹²⁰ Eventually both Inez and Elsie were transferred to the Alpha Cottage Industrial School in Kingston.¹²¹ As with

¹¹⁸ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1933), 'Clerk, St. Mary to the Colonial Secretary, 14th January 1936.'

¹¹⁹ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'Col. Herbert Hodgson to the Colonial Secretary, 27th April 1938.'

¹²⁰ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'W. Shillingford to the Colonial Secretary, 8th October 1935'

¹²¹ JA 1B/5/77/24 (1934), 'Dignum to W. Shillingford, 24th January 1936.'

these girls, the issue of aftercare dominated discussions surrounding the survival and purpose of the industrial school system.

After care of Inmates

‘Government spends considerable sums on the Institution, the activities of which are intended to save boys from the slums, the gutter and worse, and yet no steps whatever are taken to ensure that on their discharge the boys will not return to the undesirable environments referred to. In actual practice I believe many end up as ne’er-do-wells. The position really is that the money spent by the government is...wasted unless some efficient system of after care be evolved.’¹²²

The issue of after-care dominated correspondence among members of the Industrial School administration since its inception. Attempts were made to apprentice inmates with the Public Works department and the government railway when they completed their term at the Industrial School.¹²³ However, throughout the 1930s administrators found it increasingly difficult to find institutions with which to place skilled inmates. In 1935, the Director Public Works notified the Colonial Secretary that he was unable to take more than two boys each year as mechanics and two as carpenters for that year. Furthermore he had no vacancy as ‘the workshop hands were being laid off as usual towards the end of the financial year.’¹²⁴ Similarly that year the Director of the Government Railway reported that

¹²² JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Minute.’

¹²³ JA 1B/5/77/25 (1930), The file contains correspondence between the Colonial Secretary and Director of Prisons and Mr. Mair.

¹²⁴ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Director, Public Works to the Colonial Secretary, 12th January 1935.’

he had absolutely no space for boys from the government industrial school. He currently had ninety- one apprentices in the locomotive shop and a long waiting list for apprentices and other youth seeking employment.¹²⁵ The Local Forces and The Department of Science and Agriculture tended to have more flexibility with hiring as opposed to the Government Printing Office.

Administrators considered the possibility of keeping boys in house until suitable employment was found for them or releasing them into the care of ‘respectable persons.’¹²⁶ Very often the boys returned to their families after they were discharged. However it was found that in some cases, parents and guardians lived in very questionable circumstances. They believed that many parents and guardians intended to exploit the money earning potential of the boys.¹²⁷ Administrators feared that without proper employment, boys would be forced to return to the unsavory conditions in which they previously lived.

Occasionally the superintendent of the industrial school used the police and inspectors of the poor to investigate the living conditions under which parents and guardians lived before releasing the boys to their care. For example, William Hudson informed the Stony Hill administration that he was willing and able to take care of his son David Hudson. Corporal A. G. Brown found that Mr. Hudson

¹²⁵ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Director, Jamaica Government Railway to the Colonial Secretary, 15th January 1935.’

¹²⁶ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Colonial Secretary to the Director of Prisons, 19th May 1936.’

¹²⁷ Several sources refer to this practice including JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934) ‘Extracted from 1a in 4300/35: Leslie Tucker, Acting Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary.’

was not in a position to care for his son. In fact, he described Mr. Hudson as being ‘poor and not one of the respectable class of labourers.’¹²⁸ Brown further reported that Hudson was also unemployed, ‘lived in a shabby house of one apartment with a “paramour,” and could not afford to pay water rates.’¹²⁹ He, therefore, declared that Hudson was unfit to take responsibility for his son. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that David Hudson wanted to return to his father. Authorities detained him for a further six weeks under section 35 of the Industrial Schools Law in the hope that suitable alternative employment would be found so as to deter him from returning to his father.¹³⁰ Where possible, Mr. Mair, also made private inquiries to the prisons and police department to check up on the behavior of previous inmates. These efforts, nonetheless, did not change the fact that the industrial school and orphanage network lacked an efficient after care and investigation system to ensure that former inmates lived in a fairly comfortable position.

Very often information about former inmates was noted in the records as a result of desperate circumstances or extreme criminal behavior. On the 12th December 1934, Marion Johnson wrote to the Governor requesting assistance in locating her son Wilbert Mitchell who was a former inmate of the Industrial

¹²⁸ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Director of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, 28th May 1934.’

¹²⁹ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Director of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, 28th May 1934.’

¹³⁰ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), ‘Director of Prisons to the Colonial Secretary, 28th May 1934.’

School at Stony Hill.¹³¹ An extensive search revealed that Wilbert was a known 'habitual criminal' who went by several aliases including David Williams, James Brown and Lionel Williams. He had been convicted on fifteen separate occasions since October 1922 for larceny, housebreaking, burglary and vagrancy in three different parishes - Kingston, St. Catherine and St. Mary.¹³² At the time of his mother's inquiry, he was thirty-one years of age and was serving twelve months hard labor in the General Penitentiary for larceny.¹³³ In response, Miss Johnson requested that her son be released to her custody after serving his sentence. He was released on license on the 8th May 1935.¹³⁴ Upon his release, Wilbert Mitchell received a railway warrant and was placed on the train to Williamsfield. His mother spent all day at the train station waiting for him. He never showed and his name was later inserted in the Police Gazette.¹³⁵

A number of recommendations were made as to how to improve the after care of boys discharged from the reformatories. Jamaica lacked a licensing as well as a probation system in the early twentieth century. In the early 1920s, the government arranged with the Salvation Army for the Officers to act as probation

¹³¹ JA 1B/5/77/158 (1934), 'Marion Johnson to the Governor of Jamaica 12th December 1934.'

¹³² JA 1B/5/77/158 (1934), 'Particulars of Prisoner Wilbert Mitchell as per Records of the General Penitentiary.'

¹³³ JA 1B/5/77/158 (1934), 'A. Dignum to Marion Johnson, 7th January 1935.'

¹³⁴ JA 1B/5/77/158 (1934), 'Marion Johnson to the Governor of Jamaica, 20th February 1935'; 'Mr. A Dignum to Marion Johnson, 5th March 1935.'

¹³⁵ JA 1B/5/77/158 (1934), 'Marion Johnson to the Governor of Jamaica, 14th June 1935'; Acting Colonial Secretary to Marion Johnson, 17th July 1935.'

officers for prisoners.¹³⁶ It was hoped that a probationary system similar to that attached to the Borstal System in England be employed in Jamaica. Initially, a licensing system was considered to be an effective way to keep track of the boys after they leave the institution. However, earlier experiences, especially from the 1890s, suggested that the licensing system on a whole tended to be a complete failure. Several children were considered unsuited for labor and were returned to institutions such as Shortwood. Alpha, however, was able to successfully place on average five boys to be apprentices with the Government Printing Office, Carpenters, as well as the Railway system.

Shillingford presented a few suggestions that would help to improve the quality of after care for inmates. One was to establish voluntary after care committees in the various parishes. Many persons, including members of the Board of Visitors for the industrial school, did not embrace this idea because it was wholly voluntary. It meant that they would be required to find the right people to advise the former inmates as well as create a probation system to ensure that boys reported to the committees after their discharge.¹³⁷ Shillingford proposed to Mair that he should slowly dispense the reward money over a period of two years after boys were discharged rather than in one sum a year after they

¹³⁶ JA 1B/5/76/3/383, 'Draft Correspondence, 30th August 1921.'

¹³⁷ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'W. Shillingford, Inspector of Industrial School to C.C. Woolley, Colonial Secretary, 20th June 1936.'

had been discharged.¹³⁸ He believed, however, that assistance from the Parochial Boards would improve the quality of after care for boys leaving the Industrial School.

Government continued to express concern for the limited nature of after care for the inmates of its industrial schools. On the 25th November 1936, Mr. C. C. Woolley, Colonial Secretary, sent out correspondence to the Parochial Boards inquiring of their willingness to participate in the after care of former industrial school boys living in their parish. All parochial boards expressed their willingness to participate in the after care program for former industrial school inmates. Soon afterwards, Mr. Woolley instructed Mr. Shillingford to create a scheme that would facilitate the use of Parochial Boards and the KSAC as partners in caring for former inmates after their discharge.¹³⁹

The scheme required the superintendent to notify the Clerk of the Parochial Board and the KSAC of boys who were about to be discharged to their respective parishes. The names and addresses of parents and guardians would be provided. It would then become the clerk's responsibility to ascertain whether or not the boys' parents were 'respectable, willing and able to receive the boys.' If the home situation were found unsuitable, it would then become the responsibility of the Clerk to find employment for the boy as well as provide a suitable guardian to supervise and guide him. Guardians would then send quarterly reports to the

¹³⁸ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'W. Shillingford to the Colonial Secretary 4th November 1936.'

¹³⁹ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'Colonial Secretary to the Inspector Industrial Schools, April 1937.'

Superintendent. The paying out of the boys reward would be dependent on whether or not he was living an 'honest and industrious life.'¹⁴⁰ In response, many of the Parochial Boards felt that while they sympathized with the necessity to create a network of guardians to care for the boys, it was impossible for them to guarantee that they could provide the appropriate personnel to volunteer on a regular basis to the care of the boys. Many boards suggested that the government should create a separate board to cater to the after care of inmates leaving the institution. In response, the colonial secretary contacted the Jamaica Women's Association to provide the government with assistance to set up a pilot project that would facilitate the creation of an after care program for inmates.¹⁴¹ This pilot project would include the KSAC and all Parochial Boards. The Jamaica Women's Association agreed to provide assistance to the government. Several other suggestions included the use of Jamaica Welfare Limited as well as the creation of a land settlement of former inmates in the close proximity to the facility. However, there was no land available for that purpose.¹⁴²

At the end of the 1930s, therefore, colonial administrators had failed to institute an effective aftercare program for inmates leaving the industrial school. School administrators attempted to collaborate with parochial boards to find

¹⁴⁰ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'Scheme for the After Care of Boys Discharged from the Government Industrial School.'

¹⁴¹ JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'Mr. J.D. Lucie-Smith to Mrs. S.W.P. Foster-Sutton Honorary Secretary, Jamaica Women's League, 9th April 1938.'

¹⁴² JA 1B/5/77/180 (1934), 'A.D. Soutar to the Secretary of the Board of Visitors, Industrial School 22nd June 1940.'

suitable persons, within parishes, to guide and monitor former inmates in the immediate aftermath of leaving the institution. The general unwillingness within local government to assume additional responsibilities forced the colonial government to turn to philanthropic organizations for assistance. Organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Jamaica Women's Association expressed a general willingness to provide assistance to former children. However, the greatest deterrent to the creation of an efficient after care program was the failure of the colonial government to design and implement a clearly expressed child welfare policy. The absence of a concise child welfare policy, which would include all areas of infant and child development, required school administrators to be resourceful and creative with their limited resources. This meant, however, that there was no way for the government to effectively gauge if the school had been successful in achieving its main goal – the reformation of destitute and delinquent children.

Conclusion

Throughout the early twentieth century, the colonial administrations and well as the general public expressed concerns about the illegitimacy, juvenile delinquency and irresponsible parenting among members of the laboring population. This debate was often cited in the mandates of orphanages and industrial schools. Colonial correspondence revealed that the government

recognized the need for a child welfare policy but was not willing to invest and create the structure necessary to ensure the success of these institutions.

By 1900, therefore, the Jamaican colonial administration actively supported the creation of a network of industrial schools and orphanages in the island. Indeed, these early institutions provided destitute and delinquent children with access to food, clothing, shelter and a basic elementary education. Additionally, school administrators also included vocational oriented activities in the curriculum. They hoped that these additions would further enforce values of self-sufficiency and thrift as well as reinforce gender roles and notions of acceptable gender interaction. Boys maintained the general surrounding and tended to provision grounds while girls washed, cooked and learned to sew. These institutions, however, lacked the financial and human resources to engage in a more systematic attempt at social reform. In fact, administrators, where possible, drew upon the resources of the première industrial school in the island – the Government Industrial School and Reformatory.

Established in 1869, the Government Industrial School catered to both destitute and criminal children. The institution took a holistic approach to reformation. Inmates, especially boys, participated in an extensive physical and educational program. James Mair, the school superintendent, organized the boys in a house system partly to encourage good behavior and healthy competitiveness and also to inculcate a sense of community, loyalty and a general respect for

authority. The boys also received training in a wider variety of vocations than girls, including masonry, tailoring, baking, farming and metal work. They participated in national competitions and events, did work for the wider community and sold produce on the local market. In contrast, girls were offered a basic elementary education and training in sewing and various crafts such as hat and mat – making. Possibly, girls received less attention because a significantly smaller number of girls were admitted to the institution. Such emphasis on gender specialized roles in the school curriculum, however, suggests a commitment not just to training citizens but creating responsible mothers and fathers.

Several issues, however, hindered the effective running of the school. The school experienced a high turnover in teachers because they were paid less than elementary school teachers but had significantly more intense work schedules. Other industrial schools and orphanages constantly faced possible mergers and closure due to inadequate financial and infrastructural resources. Furthermore many of the children entering the institution were of poor health and had no previous exposure to education. These institutions, therefore, were required to make provisions for all areas in a child's life. Concerns over health issues such as hookworm, intestinal parasites and nutritional deficiencies dominated correspondence between school administrators and the island's medical establishment. The Department of Education often expressed unease over the

quality of the curriculum offered to inmates. It was generally felt that children in industrial schools were not on par with their counterparts in elementary schools.

Finally, the lack of a cohesive child welfare policy deterred any real expansion or improvement to the industrial school system. The closing of the Girls Department of the Government Industrial School in 1935 revealed that the colonial administration viewed many of these institutions as financial burdens. Closing the department had several legislative and judicial consequences. Resident Magistrates had to find alternate solutions to punish female delinquents who otherwise would have been sent to the school. Members of local government and the judiciary requested that central government create a central body to oversee all areas pertaining to child welfare and juvenile reform. The absence of central body made it difficult for school administrators to make proper arrangements prior to entry at the school. No one assessed the emotional, mental or physical state before they arrived at the school. Furthermore, administrators used their limited resources to provide for inmates after they left the institution. Mr. Mair relied on the police force to assess the home lives of parents and guardians prior to releasing an inmate to their care. More importantly, however, there was no way for school and colonial administrators to assess the effectiveness of industrial schools in the island. By 1938, therefore, colonial administrators remained ambiguous towards industrial schools but in general

accepted that they were essential to the discourse of citizenship and the reform of the progeny of the laboring classes.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Summary of Research

‘In all Colonial territories the first aims of the administration must be the well-being and education of the native inhabitants; their standards of life and health...’¹

Since the 1920s, discussions of governance evolved around improving access to education, healthcare and general social services. Issues related to class and gender in Jamaican society, however, determined access to these services. As a result a myriad of social, economic and political issues affected the evolution of poor relief and child welfare policies in Jamaica during the early twentieth century. Economic depression rattled Jamaica’s economy throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Consequently, wages contracted while the general cost of living slowly increased. This left the highly unskilled laboring population with few options for survival. In response to chronic economic hardship and structural inequalities, many persons opted to migrate in search of better economic opportunities. As a result Jamaica experienced widespread internal and external migration especially during the early twentieth century.

¹ Richard Frost, ‘Reflections on British Colonial Policy,’ *Pacific Affairs* Vol 18 #4 (Dec. 1945) pp 309 – 320, 320. Frost quotes from the Report to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in 1944, in which the National executive Committee makes a statement about the colonies.

Such extensive movement changed the landscape of cities throughout the island and other regional territories. In Kingston, extensive rural to urban migration produced settlements of dilapidated housing within which numerous unemployed and underemployed Jamaicans lived. Declining and the subsequent cessation of economic opportunities abroad, during the 1930s, exacerbated existing tensions as large numbers of returning residents swelled the ranks of the unemployed. Social issues such as juvenile delinquency, crime and violence and unemployment were rife throughout the city. It was within this context that members of the elite became preoccupied with the existence of not just visible forms of poverty but also the rise of a juvenile criminal and destitute class.

Complaints about the prevalence of visible signs of poverty and destitution throughout Kingston, the island's capital, dominated letters to the *Daily Gleaner*. Paupers were described as being 'generally a weak, hungry-looking, sick, dirty, ragged lot, not infrequently exhibiting physical deformities.'² The frequency with which respectable citizens encountered physically disabled and the destitute on the streets offered ample evidence of the failure of the poor relief system rather

² *The Daily Gleaner*, January 18, 1919, p. 21, H. E. Henderson – Davis' 'The Conditions in Kingston'; For more information on social conditions in Jamaica in the early twentieth century see Brian Moore and Michele A. Johnson, (eds.), "*Squalid Kingston*" 1890 – 1920: *How the Poor Lived, Moved and Had Their Being* (Jamaica: Social History Project, Dept. of History, University of the West Indies, Mona 2000) and Claus F. Stolberg, (ed.), *Jamaica 1938: The Living Conditions of the Urban and Rural Poor. Two Social Surveys* (Jamaica: Social History Project, Dept. Of History, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1990)

than the poorly functioning Jamaican economy.³ Taxpayers argued that it was their right to be 'rid of eyesores' such as beggars, the aged and infirm, as well as the mentally and physically disabled. Much of this discourse, however, was linked to a larger discussion on poverty, irresponsible parenting, illegitimacy and criminality.

Another key dimension of this discussion was the instability of family life among the laboring population. Many parents depended on the extended family or the wider community to care for their children especially when they migrated. Failure to communicate regularly meant that parents were unable to account for the quality of care their children received. In other instances, family members and guardians lost contact with relatives abroad. This happened with great frequency especially among those men who left mothers behind to care for their children. Many of these women were forced to turn to alternate means of support. Such individuals along with those who failed to find alternate sources of employment due to mental, physical or emotional ill – health turned to the poor relief administration for assistance.

Much of civil society was preoccupied with the number of young children on the streets. Fears of a juvenile criminal class permeated newspaper correspondence and official documents throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Members of the elite concluded that juvenile delinquency

³ *The Daily Gleaner*, January 18, 1919 p. 21 H. E. Henderson – Davis' 'The Conditions in Kingston.'

occurred as a result of the instability of the laboring class family due to the absence of the father. Furthermore, they identified illegitimacy rather than structural poverty as the leading cause of the breakdown of the Jamaican family and by extension, the creation of an uncontrollable juvenile population. A direct consequence of the failure to supervise and guide children of the laboring class was their exposure to habitual criminals. Civil society called for tighter legislation to control illegitimacy and to force parents, especially mothers, to bear responsibility for their ill-supervised progeny. Corrupted children were potentially unproductive members of society. The poor relief records, however, revealed that destitute, orphaned, and displaced rather than criminal children depended heavily on the state for their security and support.

The administrative structure of the Jamaican poor relief system included the Board of Supervision (BS), Parochial Boards, Inspectors of Poor and their assistants. Parochial boards funded parish poor relief through taxes and hired relief workers. The BS mediated conflict between the parochial boards and inspectors, inspected almshouses and established rules and regulations for the running of the system. Poor relief officials, however, had a dual function. Inspectors of Poor protected the financial interests of the state. They policed the poor relief system by monitoring the changing socio-economic affairs of relief recipients. Relief officials also established relationships with relief applicants and represented their interests before pauper committees. These inspectors worked

extensively with the island medical service as well as the education and prisons departments so as to facilitate collaborations and track paupers throughout varying stages of destitution and relief. A relief recipient can move from receiving a medical pass to see a doctor to being placed on outdoor relief. They may be granted money, nutrition, clothes or shoes. Due to worsening health and economic circumstances, however, a relief officer may be forced to move a pauper from outdoor to indoor relief and eventually at death, grant a pauper burial. The effective running of the poor relief administration relied heavily on the honesty, perseverance and commitment of Inspectors of Poor and their assistants. Anything less undermined the entire system. The desire, therefore, to control the movements of relief officials generated extensive conflict between parochial boards and the Board of Supervision. As a result the work of relief officers were hindered by extensive interdepartmental conflict, underfunding, and bureaucratic red tape, all of which undermined the capacity of these officers to work efficiently.

The almshouse stood at the centre of the indoor relief system. It housed the chronically sick, aged and infirm as well as the mentally and physically disabled. Many of these institutions lacked the proper infrastructure as well as human resource personnel to effectively care for inmates. Inspections of almshouses revealed unsanitary conditions, poor quality of life among inmates as well as high death rates especially among paupers housed at the Corporation Poor

House in Kingston. Reports of conflict between inmates and the almshouse staff as well as abuse of paupers further affirmed negative perceptions of poor houses. As a result, members of the community identified entry into the almshouse with social death and economic failure. Many persons refused to go to the almshouse unless they were dying or were completely without financial and emotional support. As a direct consequence, there was a general preference among Jamaicans for outdoor relief over indoor relief.

Another form of indoor relief was admittance to industrial schools. Colonial administrators relied on existing infrastructure such as industrial schools, poor relief institutions and prison facilities to care for dependent children. Financial hardship, however, forced the government to utilize local practices of childcare when catering to wards of the state. The practice, therefore, of 'boarding out,' as used by Maxfield Park Children's Home as a cheaper alternative to investing in educational programs similar to those instituted in government and private industrial schools. Members of the KSAC Poor House Committee believed that boarding children out to respectable members of society provided greater social and economic opportunities than if they remained at the home. At the core of this belief was that children acquired social skills through cohabitation, interaction and socialization. As a result, committee members failed to take any real precautions to protect the children against overwork, physical and sexual abuse. Records reveal, however, that children often ran away from their

temporary homes to relatives and other familiar persons in their lives. Within the industrial school circuit, however, 'boarding out' as a tool of social reform failed when compared to other programs attached to industrial schools.

By the 1930s, colonial administrators and members of the public advocated the use of an industrial school education as a better solution for providing inmates with the tools to survive in Jamaican society. This increased focus on the quality of education given to wards of the state reflected a general change in society about the role of children in the future of the nation. Children were key to the future prosperity of the nation. The goal of an industrial school education, therefore, was to create good colonial citizens. Schools advocated for a gender-based vocational oriented curriculum on the grounds that such an education enforced values of self-sufficiency and thrift. Boys maintained the general surrounding and tended to provision grounds while girls washed, cooked and learned to sew. This gender based curriculum helped to reinforce gender roles and notions of acceptable gender interaction among boys and girls. Many industrial schools, however, lacked the financial and human resources to engage in a more systematic attempt at social reform.

Industrial schools experienced several financial, infrastructural and human resource issues that hindered the effective running of schools. The Government Industrial School and Reformatory experienced a high turn over in teachers due to the fact that they were paid less than elementary school teachers but had

significantly more intense work schedules. Other industrial schools and orphanages constantly faced possible mergers and closure due to inadequate financial and infrastructural resources. Poor health and illiteracy among children admitted to industrial schools further compounded financial and human resource problems. Schools, therefore, were forced to take a holistic approach to childcare and reform. Colonial and school officials expressed concern over health issues such as hookworm, intestinal parasites and nutritional deficiencies. Similarly, administrators with the Education Department expressed doubts as to the effectiveness and quality of the curriculum offered to inmates. Many administrators believed that industrial school children lagged behind their counterparts in elementary schools.

One of the main problems with the industrial school system was the inability of school officials to assess the effectiveness of industrial schools in reforming juvenile delinquents. Key to the discourse of reformation was the notion of citizenship. The ideology of citizenship, as it pertained to the laboring classes, was based on a Puritan ethic. A good Jamaican colonial citizen was one who was productive, worked in the agricultural system, was law abiding, committed to Victorian gender roles and trained their own children to replicate societal values. In the nineteenth century, school administrators used the recidivism rates to assess the successful reintegration into society of former inmates. As schools expanded, however, it became more difficult for administrators to follow the progress of

former students beyond their first year of reintegration. Recidivism rates, therefore, in the early twentieth century, ceased to be an effective tool to judge the success of reform.

Overall, the lack of a cohesive child welfare and poor relief policy deterred any real expansion or improvement to the industrial school system. Many colonial administrators viewed these social service institutions as a financial burden on the taxpayer. Failure to maintain, for example, industrial schools, such as the Girls Department at Stony Hill, had several consequences. The absence of a central body made it difficult for school administrators to make proper arrangements prior to entry at the school. No one assessed the emotional, mental or physical state before they arrived at the school. In the judicial system, Resident Magistrates had to find alternate solutions to punish female delinquents. Furthermore school administrators had limited resources at their disposal to assess the home lives of parents and guardians prior to releasing an inmate to their care. By 1938, therefore, colonial administrators remained ambiguous towards industrial schools but in general accepted that they were essential to the discourse of citizenship and the reform of the progeny of the laboring classes.

This examination of poor relief and industrial schools in early twentieth century Jamaica reveals that by 1938 financial and human resource insecurities deterred efforts to improve the quality of assistance afforded colonial citizens. In fact, colonial administrators believed that the poor relief and industrial school

system was a necessary evil that had to be endured. By the arrival of the WIRC both of the sectors were underfunded, understaffed and overcrowded. Colonial administrators acknowledged the necessity of improving the quality of health, educational and social services available to the general public but they were unable to do so without assistance from the metropole.

The passage of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act corrected the underlying foundation of the British colonial policy of self-sufficiency. Initially ‘every colonial territory should be a self-supporting unit and its citizens should have only those services which they themselves out of their own moneys could afford to maintain.’⁴ The new Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 allowed the British government to provide greater financial assistance to colonies to improve the general quality of life afforded to colonial citizens. After 1945, Jamaica along with other regional colonial governments expanded the reach of social work and social services with the assistance of the Development and Welfare Organization.⁵

The findings of this research reveal that a study of poor relief has much to offer the historiography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Jamaica. Examining poor relief practices between 1866 and 1886 broadens our understanding of the workings of Crown Colony government as well as the

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates* 5th ser., vol. 361, 48.

⁵ O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of the Labour Movement in the British West Indies: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001) 388.

cultures of relief giving in the island. Another useful area of research is a long-term quantitative and qualitative investigation of poor relief since 1886. A quantitative approach to investigating the records of the Board of Supervision will provide an ideal space in which to measure the health and economic condition of the average Jamaican. Similarly, a qualitative exploration of the pauper rolls affords historians the ability to track families through the poor relief system. Both approaches not only enhances our understanding of living conditions of the Jamaican population over a long period of time but also the impact of these historical structures on policy decisions today.

Another key area that requires investigation is the project submissions of the Jamaican colonial government to the Colonial Development Fund (1929 – 1940) and the DWOWI (1940 – 1955). This area tends to be marginal in decolonization literature due to the importance of labor issues over other areas of research. Jamaican colonial administrators made several applications to improve education, housing, medical and poor relief services in the island.⁶ Understanding social welfare between 1940 and 1955 incorporates not only an assessment of the Colonial Development projects but also community development and organization. This is significant because throughout the British Empire local

⁶ This research would also incorporate work by Nigel Agar, 'Colonial Development and Welfare in Jamaica 1938 – 1968' (MA Thesis, Department of History, University of the West Indies, 1968); C. Paul Bradley, 'Welfare Colonialism in the British West Indies: A Study of Development and Welfare Policy 1938 – 1954' (MA or PhD? Thesis Columbia University; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms 1955).

leaders promoted self-help and the development of local and human resources through local initiatives. In Jamaica, as elsewhere, this took the form of cooperatives and community organizations. Examining social policies within the early twentieth century policies, therefore, reveals several continuities over time as Jamaican social welfare has continued on a set trajectory inherited by older established institutions.

Over the last few years, there has been increased interest in child welfare in Jamaica. In March 2004, the Jamaican government passed the Child Care and Protection Act. As the first comprehensive legislation on children in the island, the goal of the act was to promote the best interest, safety and well being of children. It consolidated earlier laws to establish the machinery for handling juvenile delinquents and destitute children through the courts. This also included the creation of the Child Development Agency (CDA) and the Children's Advocate. Much of this interest, however, is due to the increased attention given by the media to children's issues including physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as general crimes against children.

On Friday May 22, 2009, a fire consumed sections of the Armadale Juvenile Correctional Centre in the parish of St. Ann.⁷ The fire claimed the lives of seven girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years, left another seven girls hospitalized and an eighth in critical condition. Many Jamaicans argued that

⁷ *The Sunday Gleaner*, May 24, 2009 'Fire claims 5, 10 in hospital as fire destroys sections of Armadale Juvenile Center.' <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20090524/lead/lead1.html>

the fire was a result of inadequate supervision of these facilities by the CDA and the Children's Advocate. As a result, this calamity tested the solidity of the organizations created under the 2004 Act. In response the government sanctioned a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the causes of the fire. The findings revealed that the girls lived in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. In fact, two years before the fire, a termite infestation forced building inspectors to declare the entire building structurally unsound.⁸ After hearing witness testimonies from all parties involved, the commissioners concluded that poor living conditions were the underlying cause of unrest among the girls earlier that night. The police were called in and during the ensuing conflict a canister of teargas was thrown into the dormitory – an enclosed room with no obvious route of exit. Scientific evidence confirmed that the teargas was the cause of the fire in the dormitory.⁹

The commissioners identified several issues that undermined the effective running of juvenile correctional facilities in the island. They argued that issues such as overcrowding and inadequate sanitary facilities as well as the willful use of corporate punishment were counterproductive in the process of rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. Furthermore, correctional officers were ill equipped to deal with mental disabilities and problem children thereby exacerbating conflict in

⁸ *The Armadale Report: The Commission to Enquire into the Causes and Circumstances of the Fire on the Night of 22nd of May 2009 at Armadale Juvenile Correctional Centre at Alexandria in the Parish of Saint Ann* (n.d.: n.p.) 11.

⁹ *Armadale Report*, 70 – 80. The commissioners also employed scientific evidence to verify that the teargas started the fire in the dorm room.

these correctional facilities. More importantly, they identified that juvenile correctional facilities failed to group wards according to their classifications. These institutions housed both criminal and non-criminal (those in need of care and protection) together and often failed to isolate children with severe emotional disabilities from other members in the community.¹⁰ Finally the commissioners concluded that the overall lack of resources (financial and otherwise) undermined the efficient working of the entire juvenile rehabilitation system. The commissioners decided that the overall care provided to girls living at the Armadale Centre failed to meet the objectives of Child Care and Protection Act.

‘...The true and sincere object of institution life is the “welfare of the child” and the aim is “to return the girls to society better than when they came in”’¹¹

Several improvements have been made to correctional facilities for children between the early twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Since the 1920s the number of correctional facilities has increased exponentially with more than one institution serving a parish. On a whole the government has taken far greater responsibility for the care of criminal and displaced children by increasing overall supervision and human resource capabilities. However, the same issues that undermined the effectiveness of industrial schools in the early twentieth century have continued to plague juvenile rehabilitation system in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, poor relief in the twenty-first century is still governed by

¹⁰ *The Armadale Report*, 72.

¹¹ *The Armadale Report*, 109.

the original Act for the relief of the poor passed in 1886. Parochial Boards, now called Parish Councils, continue to operate infirmaries (former poor houses) while the Board of Supervision retains oversight of the indoor relief system. This suggests that successive Jamaican governments preferred to retain early twentieth century structures of relief giving rather than overhauling the entire system after independence in 1962. This chronic lack of resources at the state level inhibits the effectiveness of correctional training in the island. Other factors such as rapid population growth and persistent economic hardship continue to undermine government efforts to improve social services especially to children. The struggle to educate and improve the quality of life of all Jamaicans remains a persistent issue facing the country today.

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